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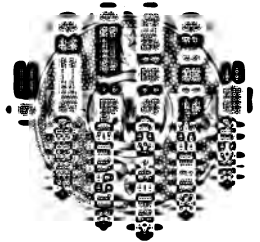
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NOTES
OF
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE



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NOTES

OF



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Selection of Sermons

PREACHED BY

HENRY ROBERT REYNOLDS. B.A.

PRESIDENT OF CHESHUNT COLLEGE

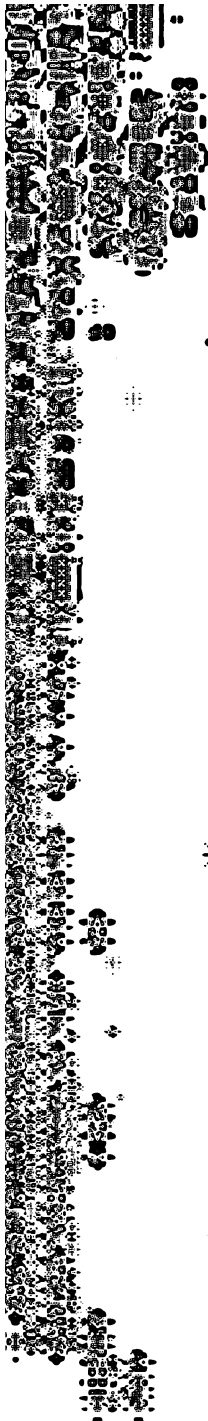
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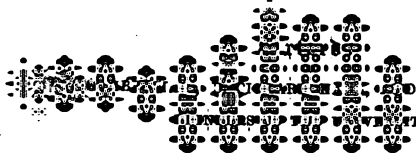
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SERMON I.

THE TWO LIVES.

ROM. VI. 2 and 11.

*How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein! ...
Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto
God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE life of the holy is the life of God; and therefore it is one life, wherever and in whomsoever it is manifested. Every spirit of living man is begotten of the great Father of Spirits; yet so wide are the apparent differences in the manifestation and clothing of such spirits, that many presumptuously say, 'This, and this, cannot be offspring of the Father.' Such presumptions are the work of shallow philosophy and partial knowledge of both man and God. It is true that certain philosophers, looking at a Bosjesman or an Esquimaux, exclaim, 'This is less than man; this is not the spirit-child of the Eternal Father:' and we need not be surprised that when partially-informed Christians see certain forms of divine life crushed with infinite burdens, trying to express that life through distasteful ceremonial;

striving to realize some impossible ideal ; living upon partial truth, mere crumbs of the great verity ; dishonouring, according to the standards of such critics, even the name of the Master and the glory of God, that they should say, 'This is the life of the devil, and not the life of God in the soul.'

The signs of a divine life and a divine sonship are very difficult to define or limit. In attempting to enumerate some of them, I do not for a moment suppose that I shall exhaust the theme. In stating many signs of the divine life in the soul, in a determinate order, I do not imply that the order of this progress can be dogmatically determined. The life of God will develop itself in entirely different modes, according to temperament, circumstances, and duties. Some men are called to work for their Lord, others to wait patiently for the coming of the Bridegroom. There is the Greek and the Jew, the male and the female, the bond and the free, the wise and the unwise, but they are all one in Christ Jesus. When the representative of a gorgeous traditional Church celebrates the sacrifice of the eucharist with all the pomp of worship and ceremonial, which seem to him necessary to express the sacrament of the body and blood of the God-man, what sympathy can he have with that group of humble worshippers of the unseen Master, who strive by simply sitting round a table, eating bread and drinking wine in His Name, to realize the mystery of Incarnate Love ? Alas, these brothers do not understand, cannot believe that they are alike

the children of the Most High! 'Idolater' and 'infidel' are the hard words which they hurl at one another. Yet it is not impossible that the Lord who gave His image to the Anglo-Saxon and the Bedouin, to the Caucasian and the Negro, may have given the life of His Spirit to the Catholic and the Presbyterian. The beginning of the divine life is very varied. Different states of feeling and entirely dissimilar emotions may mark the first presence within the soul of the supernatural and heavenly fire, may indicate the commencement of the "good work" which will be carried on by the Spirit of the Father and of the Son until the day of the Lord Jesus. If the beginnings are so varied, the further manifestations of the Spirit of life will surely refuse to follow very definitely any uniform succession. The divine life often begins with a discovery of the soul, with a consciousness of immortality, with the realization of the presence, nearness, nature, and glory of God, or with a crushing sense of sin and alienation of heart from God, or with hunger after righteousness, or with a desire and readiness to see in Christ Jesus our Lord all that the human spirit needs, or with a great willingness and anxiety to do the will of God and be engaged in His service. I am anxious to lead you to some considerations concerning the way taken by the soul of man and the Spirit of God in some of the further stages of the divine life. I wish to shew you that the sense of God may ripen into communion with God, into hoping, delighting,

and resting in the living God. I think it may appear that the sense of sin deepens into "death to sin;" that "fellowship with Christ" becomes sympathy with Him in His agony and bloody sweat, and a crucifixion with Him by our living faith; that "hungering after righteousness" may issue in holy living, and that the desire for Christian work may expand into holy zeal, and will respond to every summons to holy work; and finally, that this life, though beset by many hindrances and often paralyzed by personal weaknesses, can never rest nor grow weary, and must be "faithful unto death."

Let it not be supposed that Holy Scripture implies that every soul must make progress in the same department of Christian life in the same order of divine emotions. The danger lest there should be this misconception arising from the general order of our thought, induces me to indicate the deep reasons for these divergencies in the Christian life.

I shall endeavour to shew almost at the outset that the sceptical and speculative tendencies of human thought must and always will be different from the conservative, dogmatic, and believing tendencies, and that each of these will always be present in the Church of Christ as well as beyond its pale. The meditative and the practical souls will severally develop according to their own measure the meditative and practical tendencies awakened and guided by the Holy Ghost. Consecration to God may take the form of quiet rest and patient submission, or it may take the form

of fiery zeal; it may offer words and meditations as holy sacrifice to the Lord, or it may, kindling with angry loyalty, go forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Again, it does not follow because there are numerous developments of the divine life in the soul, that the lower always expand into the higher forms under precisely the same circumstances or order. The deepening sense of God may lead to deepening horror and loathing of sin, or to a profound sympathy with the Lord Jesus. Devoted consecration to Christian work may be quickened by every vision of God, by every longing after righteousness. The purpose of the following meditations is, to help my brethren to find out the working of the Holy Ghost within themselves and others. I hope that many anxious spirits may learn to say, 'God is leading me to Himself by a way that I knew not; these feelings of mine are holy life; these poor labours of mine for brother man are holy life; this waiting and working for God will and must end in the beatific vision, in the eternal service.' I am anxious to urge upon all who humbly believe that theirs is the life of a divine sonship, never to rest in their first emotions, and always to remember that as surely as all other life is making perpetual advances, so must this life of God in the soul. May the Father of all refresh the spirits that are struggling heavenwards, and mature the graces that are pressing towards Himself and striving to resemble Him!

Let me now endeavour to illustrate some grand common features of the life of God in the soul, and contrast them with a kind of life which is the sad and melancholy opposite and alternative of living to and being "alive unto God," and which St. Paul calls "living in sin." There are general features of the divine life fundamental to all forms of it; there are bold terrible signs of the absence of that life, which are conspicuous warnings against undue comprehensiveness. While we are eager to comfort those who are living to God and do not know it, we are anxious at the outset to be free from the charge of calling evil good, or sympathizing with the pantheistic supposition that all life is the life of God.

Two considerations are suggested by my texts, which will form a general introduction to the question which I propose to discuss.

I. The contrasted lives; "Life in sin," and "being alive unto God."

II. The process by which the one mode of life can be transformed into the other; viz. "Dying unto sin . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord."

On the present occasion I limit myself to the contrast between the two lives. The contrast is of such a kind that the unspiritual and the worldly man can perceive it, though unable to understand it. The ungodly may say, 'We do not know and do not care whether a man is pardoned or not before the invisible bar of divine judgment, whether he is justified or not in the eye of the divine law, which we

neither appreciate nor understand, but we do know whether a man is honest and upright or not; we do care whether he can bear the scrutiny of his fellows; we claim to be interested in the question, whether he keeps the law of conscience, whether his word can be relied on, whether he acts up to his professed principles, whether he carries out his convictions, whether he does that which, apart from his religion and independently of his profession, we know to be right. The world is unable to judge of the deep feelings which agitate the heart of a professed child of God, but it can recognize purity of motive and uprightness of bearing; it will honour practical holiness, though it may scorn the steps by which it is attained; it will respect and admire the result, though destitute of sympathy with the motive which prompts it.'

While making this admission, it is incumbent upon us to ask, How is it that the world is able to form these judgments, and is justified in setting up its own high principles in opposition to some of the practical developments of the higher principles assumed on the part of Christian professors? Was the civilized world qualified to do this in the days of Cicero or of Pericles? Was the corporate conscience of the world equal to the task before Christianity had leavened society? Was there to be found then, or is there to be found now, where Christianity is not a power, or where it has not been proclaimed, and where its indirect influences have not been felt,

anything approximating the same jealousy of conscience, the same notions of uprightness, the same character of integrity, honour, and benevolence, which those who now boast that they are men of the world often exhibit? Surely not; and the explanation is found in this fact, that the moral influence of Christ has extended far beyond the circle of His professed followers, that the moral principles which human nature needs and the type of character for which it is pining travel faster than the truth on which they rest, and men receive much of the influence of these things without stopping to inquire whence it came. Thus I think it can be shewn that what is good in heathenism is the dim reflection of a brighter light, that what is life-giving in human thought everywhere is the product of the Divine Mind, the stirrings in humanity of the Spirit of grace. It is capable of historic verification that the high moral influences which have animated some forms of heathen philosophy and religion have emanated from the great foci of light and spiritual intelligence which exerted their first and almighty influence upon Hebrew and Christian mind, and that age after age "the light has shone in the darkness though the darkness comprehended it not."

In Christian nations the spiritual religion of which even scepticism boasts in these days is due to the influence of heavenly truth upon acute and anxious minds, and reveals the secondary results which the character of Christ has produced upon those who do

not acknowledge his paramount claims. If worldly men are competent judges of Christian principle, if the great world knows the conclusions to which Christian truth ought to lead all its professors, it is because the atmosphere breathed by true Christians has stimulated its life and awakened its conscience. The world is indebted to the Christianity it is ready to revile for the power it possesses to call Christians to its bar.

I. Let us proceed to discuss the contrast of the two kinds of life here spoken of. In spite of the elevation of the world's standard, and of the practical depression of the Christian's standard, there is comparatively little difficulty in saying what the Apostle meant, and what we must mean, by "living in sin."

(1) We must admit that the conventional meaning of the phrase obscures its true application. It has been almost appropriated to describe certain forms of bold and unblushing transgression of moral law, which merit the chastisement of human power, and call for the indignant remonstrance of society. If a man indulges in gross sensuality, if he yields to the appetites of which every man has the germ, if he puts no rein upon his lusts, if he gives way to the hungry solicitations of his flesh, if he is in the habit of seeking forbidden pleasures, if he defies public opinion and divine law, he is said to "live in sin." If a man is known to transgress the law of God in spite of public opinion and of the lines placed by divine and social law for the maintenance of order,

if he is detected in the practice of dishonesty, if he is found to spend and speculate with other people's money, but to elude the grasp of law by artifice and cunning, he is said to "live in sin." In plainer words, if a man is a known drunkard, adulterer, or rogue, he is said to "live in sin;" and there is no folly, no impudence, that dares henceforth to excuse or palliate his conduct. No man in a Christian country would dream of defending, still less of recommending such conduct. It is condemned without reserve by every conscience that is not utterly seared. Humanity, into whatever abysses it may sink, whatever degradation it may contract, will be found ready to denounce those who do such things. But the corruption of human nature goes down deeper, and the ravages of sin are far more extensive than this.

(2) It must be admitted that that man is "living in sin" who can ever, even occasionally, commit such acts as these without the bitterest compunction and remorse. If under the pressure of grievous temptation any man so far forgets himself and his destiny as to commit mournful offences against the law of God and man, and if his only thought is, 'How shall I escape detection?' 'how shall I be secure against the indignant scorn of the world?' if his weakness does not humble him, if his sense of guilt does not overpower him, however virtuous he may appear in the interval, however loud may be his profession of religious feeling, he is "living in sin," he is taking pleasure in ungodliness, he is only happy in the absence of God. The

disposition of his mind is prone to the very form of transgression which by his attempt to conceal it he acknowledges to be heinous, and which by his continued profession of religion he openly denounces.

(3) That man is "living in sin" who habitually does what he knows to be wrong, but endeavours to palliate it by pleading the force of circumstances, the nature of society, or the custom of the world. Let it be in personal habits, in the government of the tongue, in the working of evil passions, of pride, vanity, or self-indulgence; let it be in the management of his household, the education of his children, or in his domestic expenditure; let it be in the customs of trade and commerce, in the way of transacting business or conducting a profession, in the maintenance of his political principles, the carrying out of his party purposes, or in his denominational and ecclesiastical preferences; we say, if a man under any of these circumstances is doing what he knows to be wrong, but excuses the doing of it on the ground that his neighbours do the same, or that the little evil is overbalanced by what he deems a greater good, to all intents and purposes he is "living in sin." Nor is the evil diminished by the force of habit obliterating the trace of moral delinquency. If he has by frequent commission of his sin lost the sense of its *evil* he is only proving how closely the Evil One has intertwined himself about his nature, and how his transgression, instead of appearing as a foul blot upon his character, has become a dark shade

over his own eye. "The light that is in him is darkness, and great is that darkness."

(4) That man is "living in sin" who habitually neglects to do that which God and his conscience have often called upon him to accomplish. Sins of omission are as numerous, as heinous, as sins of commission. "To him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The neglected chance, the lost opportunity, will often indicate that a man is "living in sin." If it is sin for him to leave undone those things which he ought to have done, then that life is a life of sin which habitually neglects the practice of charity, patience, self-sacrifice, and worship. It is not enough that a man should avoid the practice of evil, or abstain from the excesses which ruin the character of others; it is obvious that he must not be habitually lacking in generosity, in good temper, in charitable impulse, in self-restraint, in religious emotion, in consecration to Christ, in zeal and work for God and man. If it is sin to leave undone those things which he ought to have done, and he habitually leaves such acts of worship or self-sacrifice to the so-called "saints," pleading exemption on the ground of press of business or worldly custom, he is "*living in sin.*" On the same principle the habitual neglect of the means of grace is a "life of sin." There are multitudes who raise no intelligent objection to the truth of God or the claims of His holy worship; and who, with no cause but sheer indifference to the eternal life, openly refuse the practice of

any religious service, neglect the Church, the Book, the House, the Day of God, and are careless about the consequences of their mad indifference.

Further, he who finds pleasure in the commission of sin, who hankers after forbidden sweets, who would like to go where he could escape detection, where he could do that which he knows is wrong and be exposed to no reproach; he who is not afraid of his own condemnation in doing that which is contrary to God's will, who never thinks of the absolute wrong of certain courses, but only groans under the fetters which forbid him to indulge in them with impunity, is without question living in sin. Sin is living in him; is preying on his life, will inevitably force on him its wages.

To sum up the whole matter in the words of Holy Scripture, "All ungodliness is sin." To live an ungodly life, to be without God, without His love, His presence, to act irrespectively of His authority, to labour on without His approbation, to find pleasure in what is opposed to His will, to yield the heart up to His enemy, to escape as far as possible from His control, is to live in sin, and bring the consequences of such a life down upon the soul.

However orthodox your creed, however loud your profession, or conspicuous your semblance of virtue, whatever is your excuse or palliation in the ears of your friend or enemy, you know that so long as you are not justified at the bar of conscience and the tribunal of God, your life is a life of sin; it is not a

divine life. All profession of a divine life on your part is an hypocrisy and a sin. You may be Catholic or Protestant, Evangelical or Unitarian, Calvinist or Arminian, but you know that you are living in sin, and there is nothing divine in your life, except those strivings which you have resisted, that light which you have quenched, that Saviour, that divine Lord and Redeemer who stands unadmitted at the door of your heart's life.

II. Let us now proceed to the investigation of the contrast drawn by the Apostle between "living in sin" and being "alive unto God."

It is not so much the contrast between the life of sin and the life of God in a human soul, as the mode in which the soul of man may busy itself and characterize itself in this world of ours. The point of view from which we shall here continue to treat the subject, is not that of a second life within our life, whether it be that of the devil or God, but that of the activity, characteristics, and occupation of the soul itself. We all understand what is meant by being 'alive to' anything. By the phrase is meant a vivid conception of its reality, a joy in its presence, a devotion to its interests. Thus one man is alive to business, another to his reputation, another to truth. One man is alive to beauty in nature or art, he is therefore quick to discern its presence, keen to criticize its counterfeits, filled with joy when surrounded with its exponents. Another man is alive to literature or science, his ear is sensitive to every message

from the great world of letters and invention, and the world exists, so far as he is concerned, to sustain and furnish material for his favourite pursuit. One man is alive to the well-being of his own country, and another to the wider interests of man. By means of these illustrations we may form a good explanation of the phrase "alive to God." With the help of them we may assume that a man is alive unto God :—

(1) When he fully recognizes the signs of the presence of God.

Habitual transgression or neglect of the laws of God is incompatible with the condition of a man who sees God everywhere—above, around, behind, before, and within him. A practical desire to escape from the laws and retribution of the Most High is impossible to one who sees in the sunbeam which explores the distant mountain or opens the silent flower, and in all the light that shines out of darkness, the eye of the Father of Heaven ; impossible to one who feels that the persistence of all the properties of nature, of matter and motion, the continuance of all life, the maintenance of all the conditions of existence, and the invariability of the laws which govern all creation—instead of shutting out God from thought—do bring Him into every thought, and make Him the infinite witness of every action, the support and stay of all being. That man is "alive to God" who habitually realizes the divine presence, to whom God is not a *theory* by which he can conveniently account for the universe, or a *name* for certain human conceptions of

nature and its working, or a *principle* which deserves investigation when life's hard work is over, or an *invention* of priestcraft to terrify and scare the soul, or a philosophic *concept* the presence or absence of which has little to do with life or happiness, but the great and only reality, the prime and principal element of all his thoughts. No one fully recognizes the presence of God unless he has advanced beyond the teaching of nature, and received from Holy Scripture, from the experiences of holy men when moved by the Holy Ghost, from the life of the Church, from the inward operations of the Spirit in his own heart, more than philosophical speculations can give him. He has learned from nobler sources than the pure reason, or the trembling conscience, or the widespread activities of power, his estimate of the character of God. He has been to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and there comprehended the righteousness and the love of God, and he has gone back into the great region of conscience, of reason, and of nature, with the lesson he has learned *there*, and can compel the cold impassive laws to murmur to him of pity, and teach conscience to be at peace with a higher revelation than that of law: and while his reason exults in God, who is ONE and not two, he spreads out the ineffable love over the universal wisdom; he feels that the justice and the mercy of God are two manifestations of the same God; he adores the compassion and exults in the grace of God, while he bows before His unsullied and eternal Majesty. The

attributes of God are not a Pantheon of discordant deities, but in the cross of Christ they are proved to be rays from the one central undivided glory. He who is alive unto God is fully sensible of the presence of all these moral perfections in every manifestation of Himself. If we realize the presence of God we draw near at once to all His nature; and the manifestation of one attribute brings with it to the heaven-taught soul all the rest. Conscious of one glorious perfection, we discern therein the presence of Him to whom all perfections belong. If alive unto God, every revelation of His infinite essence suggests to our quickened spirit the presence of our Father and our Friend.

(2) If a man is alive unto God, the sense of the divine presence awakens all the energies and engages all the faculties of his nature.

If duly conscious of the divine presence, we shall render to Him into whose presence we are perpetually brought the appropriate homage of our entire being. Then every place is a temple, every act is a sacrifice, every sin the pollution of a sacred place, the defilement of a holy day. No praise that we can render can ever equal the demand of conscience, nor will our actual obedience ever realize the ideal we have formed of consecration to Him. It is morally impossible for one who is alive unto God to imagine that he is doing too much to express his sense of reverence, gratitude, or obligation. He can hold back no faculty, no affection, no treasure, saying

"this is mine and may be appropriated to my own ends." The 'faculty' is God's own gift; say rather, God's own power working through the human will; the 'affection' is a divine incentive meant to reveal the God of love, and must not be made a rival to Him who gave the power to love and the object to be loved; while on every one of his 'treasures' he has learned to write, "Holiness unto the Lord,"—"bought with a price." In one word, self is subdued to Him, and human will is lost in God's.

I am not overstating this subject, for the illustration of the Apostle is taken from a fact of supreme and sublime uniqueness. Life unto God can find no lower type than the life of the God-Man, in whom the will of God was done; and it is not the earthly life of Jesus to which Paul refers, but his resurrection-life, to which he points as the great analogy of the divine life of the Christian. The image is not a casual flight of rhetoric, it runs through the entire New Testament. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." We are "crucified," "buried," "risen with Him" through the mighty energies of the new life.

It may be objected that if this is what is meant by "living unto God," or being "alive unto God," there is not even the smallest chance of ever realizing it. The affairs of this life, the passions of the flesh, the temptations of the devil, the fallen nature of which we are conscious, all put insuperable obstacles in our

way. It may be said, 'None but he who escapes from the world, who renounces the ties of home and business, and disdains the pursuit of earthly pleasure, can ever feel thus about the eternal God; we must die to know the faintest breathings of this higher life. The sacrifice is too great to expect or dream of. It may be the lot of the great heroes of the faith, but it is impracticable and impossible for us.' If the effort to devote our life, our nature, our powers, our treasures, our all, to God, seem to us an awful wrench, and is a task of huge difficulty; if it present itself to our minds in such a form, then indeed we are not "alive unto God." For observe—

(3) If a man is alive unto God, he will not only realize the divine presence, and feel the claim made by the divine Being upon every faculty of his nature, but he will find his highest desires gratified. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." If we are alive unto God, we shall find that we are following the bent of our true nature. We shall fear an inward contradiction and antagonism of our nature to God, far more than the crucifixion of our passions. He that drinketh of the water given him by Christ, shall never thirst after those draughts of carnal pleasure to be found in the broken cisterns of human invention, and it shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

The soul of him who is alive to God will dwell at ease. He will rejoice evermore. He has found the source of all blessedness, and is in the joyous

company of those who are pressing ever nearer, ever up to God.

Some will ask, 'Is not finding joy in God the very opposite of finding it in anything else? Must we not be cut off from all creaturely love, and have crucified all our earthly human feelings before it is possible?' My reply is one which cuts at the root of spiritual pride and morbid asceticism. It is this; the more spiritual we become, so much the more shall we see God in all things. If we can find the manifestation of God in all things, we shall transform even earthly duties and affections into communion with Him. The glories of nature to the spiritual man who is "alive unto God" are revelations not of beauty nor of nature, but of God Himself. The blessedness of human love is the drawing near not of an earthly love merely, but of the Father's heart. The pursuits of life may be so ordered that whatever we do, we may do all to the glory of God. There must be a mode of commerce with outward things possible, which is altogether pure and hallowed and divine. God who is a spirit, the purest and most absolute of spirits, is that spirit, nevertheless, which stands in closest relation to matter. All things live, and move, and have their being as the expression of His will. God triumphs in the works of His hands. He looked on all and called them very good. The creature itself has been subjected to the vanity of human worship, but not willingly; and it also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Our flesh

is capable of becoming not an obstacle to divine communication with us, but the medium of that communication. Even we shall look into one another's eyes ere long and know that they shall never grow dim in death. We are body and soul as well as spirit, to be brought into far closer relation to the universe than we can enjoy in this transitory and perishable body; and the great hope which we thus have purifies us even as Christ is pure, and shews us that it is in the flesh and in the world, and through human affections and duties and work, that we may, that we shall, see God. By two arguments then, the one derived from the most fundamental idea we have of God, and the other from the ground-truth of the Christian revelation, that is, from the spirituality of God and the resurrection of man, we see it must and will be possible to find God in all His works; so that as we become more holy, more like God Himself, we shall have more freedom in the conduct of our daily life, we shall see God in it, and gain from it an idea of the kind of fellowship we shall enjoy throughout eternity with God.

Idolatry calls some of the blessings of God, some of the works of His hands, some of the perfections of His ineffable Being, by His holy and reverent name, and thus takes that name in vain. It stops short with the medium or channel of mercy and goodness, and having called that, God, has lost the real meaning of the mercy, and raised up barriers between the soul and God.

Pantheism confers on evil as well as good the same grand name, and is reduced to the dilemma of either losing its God altogether or losing the individuality of man.

It has been left for Christianity to penetrate and look through all things; to see them equally dependent upon the will of God, equally insufficient to meet the wants of the human spirit; to find their beauty and blessedness in the everlasting nature and eternal being of the blessed God Himself; to separate the evil from the good, the evil spirit from the holy spirit; to bring evil down from the throne where false speculation had placed it; to repudiate the position that its seat is in the nature which God pronounced very good, or in the flesh which can be transfigured or taken up into the Godhead, or in man, as man, who is made in the image of God; to prophesy the final extinction of all sin, the fall of the devil from his seat of power, and the complete glorification of the whole man, and the whole of man's universe; and to see, in anticipation of this sublime consummation, God in all things, and all things in God; to be "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The contrast of these two lives, "life in sin" and the "life unto God," finds in Christianity its highest explanation. In a subsequent discourse we shall endeavour to shew how "life in sin" is indeed a "life of sin," and how being "alive unto God" is indeed the "life of God" in the soul; and how the "life of

God" may supervene even in a soul which has been "living in sin." Meanwhile, dear brethren, decide for yourselves whether you are living in known, unrepented, unhated sin, or whether you are "alive unto God" in the workings of conscience, the speculations of reason, the blessedness of earthly love, the responsibilities of life, and the hopes of the Christian.

SERMON II.

DEATH UNTO SIN.

ROM. VI. 2 and 11.

*How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? . . .
Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,
but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

IN a former discourse the two lives have been described and contrasted, life in sin and life unto God. It would be difficult to conceive of two modes of life more obviously opposed to one another. They cannot coexist in the same spirit. If sin is delighted in, God is dreaded. If sin is mocked at, extenuated and excused in self or others, if sin is regarded as venial, insignificant or harmless, the eye is blinded, the conscience is seared, and the faculty by which man can see God is rendered hopelessly imbecile. There is no tendency in human nature by means of which the evil can be remedied or undone. The great punishment of sin is death; that is, moral alienation of heart from God, sinful habit, bias, and tendency. Consequently every sin carries in itself its own perpetuation and the germ of further transgression.

The constitution of human nature, which renders this reproduction and aggravation of sin as certain as the laws of growth and decay, is a beneficent arrangement. It cannot be altered or modified without a modification of those blessed and beautiful processes by which the righteous waxes stronger and stronger, and the path of the just brightens into perfect day. It is the peculiarity of nature by which all that constitutes character is evolved, and without which progress would be impossible in the education of the race, in the practice of virtue, in the divine life. If man did not by every one of his actions affect his own being, increase his powers or diminish them, augment or reduce some of the tendencies and dispositions which go to make up his earthly character, there would be no practical basis for virtue; his moral and intellectual nature would be brought to a stand, and responsibility be inconceivable. The natural consequence therefore of a "life in sin," the upshot and outcome of it, is *death*, separation from God. The sinner, left to the forces and bias which he is perpetually augmenting by sin,—like a planet that is losing its hold upon the central sun,—wanders farther and farther from the living God; blasphemes, and then forgets His name, and runs in imminent peril of eternal severance from the source of light, love, and blessedness.

A life unto God supposes a spirit to whom the nearness, the perfections, the work of the Lord are unutterable delights; to whom the whole universe is

a transparent medium, through and behind which is seen the face of the Eternal God. The life unto God once begun within the soul, brings, by the same natural peculiarity of which we have spoken, its own reward with it. The eye that sees God at all, sees ever more of the eternal light, and becomes more apt to discern in the heaven above and in the earth beneath, in temporal blessings and inward struggles, in the mysteries of Providence and revelation; the handiworking and the glory of the Father.

The question recurs then with added interest, how shall those that are living in sin ever learn to be alive unto God? Before proceeding to answer this question, let me remind you that the charge had been brought against the gospel of Christ, in the form in which it was proclaimed by Paul, that that gospel looked leniently on sin, that the grace of God in Jesus Christ overlooked the heinousness of transgression, that it was antinomian, and made light of the consequences and doom of the evildoer. Because a way of pardon was announced, because a complete and perfect righteousness was given even to the ungodly by faith in Christ, unbelief urged the ruinous accusation that it would be safe to continue in sin, cherishing meanwhile the hope that grace might abound through righteousness unto eternal life. The same objection has been often taken by those who have misunderstood the blood of Christ, by those who have dared to make the atonement an indulgence to future sin, by those who have failed therein to perceive the

deep sources of the heavenly life, and by those who have been ready with their imitations of its excellence, with their substitutes for its sanctifying power. The world, impregnated in Christian countries with Christian ideas, often acts upon this delusive supposition, summing up its faith thus: 'We believe that our Saviour came into the world to save sinners, therefore we poor sinners may go on as we have done, and it will be all right at the last.' Some theologians point to the impurity of the lives of Christians, and say that the gift of righteousness by a declarative act of God's justice and grace violates all moral proprieties, and they reiterate the charge, "Ye go on in sin that grace may abound." There are other theologians, who represent the ground of acceptance at the bar of God as the holiness wrought within the soul by the grace of God, rather than the infinite worthiness of the blood and obedience of Christ; and they often reiterate the charge that the evangelic doctrine speaks merely of a fictitious salvation, and is, in other words, the craving of unregenerate hearts, that grace might abound although they continue in sin.

Now the Apostle boldly takes up the accusation, admits its seeming plausibility, anticipates its possible force, and answers it, not by withdrawing his broad statements touching the power of divine grace, not by lowering the standards of holiness, not by transferring the ground of justification from the cross of Christ to the infused righteousness of the regenerate, but by shewing what was involved in that

faith which justifies the soul. "How," says he, "shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?"... "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be *dead* unto sin through Jesus Christ our Lord." In other words, he shews that there is a process in the beginning of the divine life which is much more than the sense or conviction of sin against a holy God;—which is identical with faith in the blood of Christ, and which he has a perfect right to call *death unto sin*. The life unto God, of which we have spoken, can never supervene in a soul which has been living in sin, "except," says he, "through a death unto sin." The justification, the righteousness of God when given to a sinner, implies the removal of the penalty of sin, the non-imputation of iniquity, the gracious and supernatural obliteration of the curse of transgression, the exhaustion of the sting of death, the annihilation of the wages of sin. But we have seen that the curse of sin is in part sinfulness, that the 'death' which follows upon sin is the bias and tendency to sin; that the imputation of iniquity is at first the alienation of the heart from God, is the beginning of the second death. Therefore, if God takes away this curse, and forgives our sin, the very first application to our heart of His grace, the fact that occurs in our consciousness, the thing that is done in us, is, the extinction of the evil bias, the obliteration by sovereign grace of our sinful tendencies, the impartation of the new heart and the right spirit, the beginning of a new life in our soul, even life unto

God. The infusion of righteousness in us, the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, the new heart, the repentance towards God which Christ is exalted to give, *is*, the form in which the remission of the chief and first penalty of sin takes place. Our new and holy life is not the ground of our justification,—which is, alas! the hopeless doctrine of certain extremes of theological opinion,—nor is it, strictly speaking, the consequence of our pardon and acceptance with God; but it is in one sense *the pardon itself*, it is the way in which the Holy Ghost slays that enmity within us which was the great curse of sin, and actually undoes the penal consequences of our original, actual, and habitual sins. “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” The righteousness of which Paul speaks, is, when operating in the heart of the sinner, a death to sin and a life unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As far as his illustration is concerned, the Apostle states a truism when he says that one who is dead to sin cannot live any longer therein. A man who is dead to sin may be carried away from his standing-ground by some terrible and novel blast of temptation. Such a man may be over-credulous of the flatteries of prosperity; may be weak under the fierce lashes of pain; may be overtaken by a fault; haunted into despondency by some vivid remembrance of sin; driven by the malice of the devil into antagonism and rebellion: but if he be “dead to sin,” it is irrational, it is a contradiction in terms, to assert that

he can "live in sin" in any of the senses in which we have interpreted the phrase. What then is meant by the words? What is the moral change that can deserve so great a name, and how is the change effected?

(1) "Death to sin" is not a desperate fear of the consequences of sin. Take an extreme case,—obvious fear of consequences, although vivid and agonizing, fails to repress gross vice and crime. There are no cowards so great as those who often make violent assault on the life and property of others. They choose darkness that they may avoid detection; they are armed to the teeth when they go against feebleness and womankind. They are afraid before the fear cometh, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf. There are hundreds, thousands of drunkards in England, and of opium-eaters in China, who know and fear the doom of the intemperate, and still "live in sin." A clear knowledge of their certain ruin fails to quench their desire for the flame which is to consume them.

Multitudes fear the wages of sin, know that they are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and perdition, and yet never turn from their evil way. They tremble at the preaching of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, but sin as if they never trembled. Dear brethren, fear may have kept you back from the commission of sin, and warned you to paths of sobriety, purity, honour, and usefulness, and yet never have slain the

desire after what is hateful to God. Many from fear of disease, bankruptcy, starvation, or eternal torment, are restrained from the commission of certain classes of sins, after which their heart is nevertheless craving. Mere abstinence from a lawlessness for which the soul is secretly longing is not "death to sin." If all that Christ has effected for us is limited to the creation of trembling and fear, if it be possible still to covet that which He has doomed with His displeasure, if we fear the suffering more than the sin, if the wrong is determinable by the misery it can inflict, and if our sense of right has received no higher baptism nor been elevated into a higher region, then we cannot assume that in Christ we are "dead to sin," nor base on our experience any argument so great as this. The illustration will not hold, and we are open to the charge of the sceptic or the worldling.

(2) "Death to sin" is not respect to the opinion of the world. The good opinion of our fellow-citizens, glory (*δόξα*) as the Greeks conceived it, is a powerful motive to virtue. A member of a community of noble natures is like the young sapling of the forest, drawn upward, made erect and strong together, with its companions and surroundings. But if our only reason for honourable conduct is to secure the approbation of fellow-man, the smile of the fortunate, the confidence of those who are about us and below us, or the good opinion of society, there is nothing eternal in our virtue. Then if our circumstances were changed, we should change also. Let us be put back to times

when a lower honour prevailed in business or in society, on the exchange and in the cabinet, we should be ourselves forced back to the undeveloped morality of the past, and "live in" the practice of what we now see to be "sin." "Death to sin" means vastly more than embracing the current morality of the Christian community, since the Christian faith has brought into that community multitudes who have never passed from death to life. The voice of the corporate conscience of renewed humanity itself falls short of the holy will of Christ as revealed in each believer's soul by the ministry and witness of the Holy Ghost. It cannot be said, How shall we who yield to the law of the Christian community, and are implicitly governed by the good opinion of good people, "live any longer in sin?"

(3) "Death to sin" is not identical with self-respect. There are those who are careless about the world's opinion or respect as long as they can secure their own; who say, 'We would rather be satisfied with ourselves than secure the plaudits of our generation.' This reverence for conscience; this recognition of an authority higher than the decisions of courts or cabinets, of family circles, or of Christian communities; this superiority to fashion and clique; this independence of the judgment of others, though that judgment be backed by the thunders of angry priesthoods and the curses of ignorant mobs; this power to stand alone against the world is closely akin to the highest virtue. That man must have the

Divine teacher and strength within him who can brave the hostility of the world, and rest satisfied with the decision of conscience; but yet as an ultimate principle of action, self-respect and veneration for conscience is not sufficient. Whenever this has been the leading and ultimate principle of individuals, or communities, or nations, they have gone wrong, and have had no power to put themselves right. The law which man is to himself may become itself inverted and misconceived, and then there is no higher power to rectify the evil. The proud independence of mankind may speedily run up into an audacious independence of God. The indifference to human censure, and reverence for the language of our own heart and conscience, may be abused into forgetfulness that "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Self-respect may rapidly blossom into self-idolatry. It cannot be said by the proud self-conscious philosopher, 'How shall we that have a most entire respect and overweening reverence for our own consciences, who care nothing for the opinion of others, but only seek to be true to ourselves; how shall we who have so satisfying a conviction of the wisdom of our own judgment, "live any longer in sin?"' Because, an objector may at once reply, the very essence of sin is breaking a law which God's will has assigned to the government and restraint of that 'self' of which you are so proudly complacent. If you yourself are sinful to begin with, corrupt in your bias and tendencies, ever falling off from God, from heavenly, spiritual, and

eternal things, what proof is there that you are not "living in sin?" This vaunted self-judgment may set its imprimatur on that which is hateful to God as well as to man, and prove the hopelessness of mere unaided conscience in destroying the "life of sin."

(4) "Death to sin" is not secured by *orthodox creed*, *ceremonial exactness*, or even *religious zeal*. These things are all occasionally confounded with it, because they are mistaken for the "life of God in the soul." It is obvious that the intellect may refuse to rebel against a most rigidly accurate creed through simple incapacity. The orthodoxy of millions is unintellectual assent to what is true. No difficulties are felt or surmounted, no perplexities ever arise to trouble them. They believe, they subscribe to, they defend their creed; they denounce those who do not agree with them; they may even be ready to suffer in the cause of orthodoxy; but at the same time there is no living connexion between these propositions and their daily life. Any other faith would do just as well. They do not understand their own creed sufficiently to make it bite hold of their passions or grapple with their conscience. The mere association of ideas is not living faith, nor "death to sin."

It is trite and common-place, yet withal needful here, to assert that rigidly accurate doctrine, that scrupulous exactness in ceremonial requirement, that eagerness and zeal in religious matters may be compatible with a "life of sin." The history of the Church is full of proofs that neither articles, nor

sacraments, nor profession, nor even great sacrifices for religion, avail to slay the sin of the heart, or undermine the force of temptation, or render the soul alive to God; so that it will never be reasonable for a zealous Christian to exclaim, 'How shall we who are sound in the faith, who are baptized into the name of Christ, who are zealous for the truth, who are eager to make proselytes from heathenism or schism, who are ready to devote money, time, and influence to the interests of the Church, how can we live any longer in sin?'

By this process of exclusion we have brought the meaning of the phrase "death to sin" to a much more limited group of experiences. It is neither fear of consequences, nor deference to public opinion, nor self-respect, nor veneration for conscience, nor orthodoxy, nor ceremonialism, nor zeal, which can be regarded as death to sin, or life unto God. Yet we see that the Apostle considers that he is nevertheless justified in identifying this "death to sin" which intervenes between the "life of sin" and the "life unto God" with union to the Lord Jesus Christ, that which he sometimes calls "faith in his blood," sometimes "baptism into Jesus Christ," sometimes our "living by faith on the Son of God," because "Christ liveth in us." We are not here prepared to discuss the bearing of the death of Christ upon the government of God, or the manifestation of the Father's heart; but simply to expound the way in which the closing of our whole nature with Christ

involves, includes within itself, the death-blow to sin. We have seen, from the very nature of forgiveness itself, that it is identical in its practical and experimental aspects with the supply of a new bias, the creation within us of a new life. No penalty of sin has been removed from us, unless sinfulness itself be undermined. Corruption and evil tendency are the grievous consequences which the law of nature imposes on sin and transgression. Christ is exalted to give repentance (*μετάνοια*), and therefore the new heart and right spirit. The great proof that His work of suffering and death is the objective fact and consideration by which the government of God is rectified or vindicated in shewing mercy, is that being by the right hand of God exalted, Christ sent forth the Spirit of quickening, conviction, and holiness upon the stricken, guilty souls who compassed His death. The gift of the Spirit by the exalted Christ is frequently urged by the apostles as the great pledge of the Messianic and redemptive work of Jesus. The bestowment and baptism of the Spirit is spoken of as "the earnest of the purchased possession;" the gage and the foretaste of the gracious remission of all the miserable consequences, and penalties, and wages of sin. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." "If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Why the death and resurrection of

Jesus was needed to precede the dispensation of the Holy Ghost? how the rending of the veil of His flesh was the only appointed way through which the great High Priest and representative of man could enter the holiest of all? why the forgiveness of sins is made dependent upon the sufferings and blood of Jesus? what is the philosophy of the plan of salvation, we do not at this moment inquire. Our simple object is to know what the Apostle meant by our "being dead unto sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is clear that by this phrase he interpreted what he also calls our faith. The truth which he here lays down, and calls Roman Christians to recognize, is of vital moment to all Christians. It is the most conspicuous vindication of faith, and the most satisfactory evidence of the reality of Christ and His Church. Paul knew he was appealing to a safe and sure tribunal when he went right to the consciousness of his converts for a point-blank refutation of the charge that secularism, and scepticism, and anti-nomianism might bring against him. "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" It is certain that the Apostle would not have these Romans reckon thus unless it were true. Sad delusion it would be for men to make this reckoning, take this Divine renovation and arrest of curse for granted, when there was no truth or reality in it. Paul were the grimmest deceiver of his fellow-men if he sought to persuade these Romans by any mere

self-assurance, or self-magnetization, to believe a lie concerning themselves. Observe, it is not merely that they are to reckon that Christ died for their sins, but they are also to reckon that they too are dead unto sin through Jesus Christ. The faith in Christ's blood is therefore more than the intellectual process, or they would have no right to conceive that they were "dead unto sin" and unable to live any longer therein. Now, Christian brethren, the appeal which Paul made to those Romans I venture to make to your Christian consciousness: "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The illustrations of St. Paul are twofold; based on the union between Christ and the true believer in His passion and His resurrection.

I. The union between Christ and the believer in His passion.

Faith in the crucified Christ is spoken of as a crucifixion. "By the cross of Christ," says the Apostle, "the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world;" "I am crucified with Christ;" "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." We are "buried with Him by baptism into His death." The thought often recurs that our faith in Him nails our own hands to the cursed tree, closes and films our eye on worldly pageant and glory, crowns us with thorns, exposes us to contumely and shame, makes us the spurn and the butt of devilish malice, taunts our agony with a cup which we cannot drink,

buries us away out of sight of the world, rolls a stone to the door of our sepulchre, shuts us up in darkness, makes us see to the uttermost the misery, the shame, the cowardice, the miscreant humour, the curses, the consequences, the wages of sin. If we have taken up this thought, not only into our intellects, but into our entire spiritual nature, so that it has entered into the very essence of our being, that "Christ died for our sins," then we are dead. We have gone through the shame and humiliation of His death. As we find that He has taken upon Himself our iniquities, and borne our infirmities; that He, the infinite representative, the compendium of human nature, suffers the approach of temptation, and wrestles with the dire enemy of man; suffers for us, from the nearness of evil to His spotless mind, an agony that our words will not attempt to pourtray, we bear His reproach. When we know that He is voluntarily tasting our bitterness that He may sympathize in our mystery and misery, that He has come into our flesh bringing a new life into it, arresting the curse, stanching the putrefying sores, and staying the consequences of the first fall, and of all the other consequent falls of our poor humanity, we are fairly beaten, mortified, crushed with the measureless mercy. As we come to know, to feel, that He is the end of the law and the revelation of the law, the complete exhibition of the Father's ideal of human life, and that Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" of our humanity; as we thus see the strange perplexity and apparent

paradox 'of the innocent suffering' for the guilty—a glaring fact which we cannot dispute; as we behold the Living Law writhing under the transgressions which his fathers and his brothers had committed; as we find that though He is the well-beloved Son, there is no sorrow like unto His sorrow, for it pleases the Lord to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief; as we see in His death the curse of broken law written on the whole of humanity; as we hear in His dying cries the melting and breaking of the perfect heart of the God-man over *all* sin, and therefore over *our* sin; as we are taught by apostles to see in this provision something more than the awful risks of goodness, we do *not* learn from it to burn and storm with indignation against the murderers of the Lord, or to sicken with despair for our miserable race, which after stoning its prophets and ostracizing its noblest sons, and chasing its beautifullest spirits up to heaven, at length set with dæmoniac fury upon the best and most perfect of all, crying, "It is not fit that He should live"—but on the contrary, we mourn and mortify our nature, knowing that this life of humble obedience, of heroic resignation, that this death of cruel perplexity, is the great grief of God over sin, the great revelation of a crushing pity, and of the overflow of the bursting heart of the Eternal God. As we become alive to what the death of Christ really is and means, how it prepares the only way by which a new life could enter our race, and a new spirit be given to transgressors, by which God could

justify the ungodly, and still be just; as all this, and very much more than this, is partially felt by the simplest mind when it "closes with Christ," (as the old divines expressively said,) it is not difficult to understand that faith in Christ, that union to Christ, involves dying with Christ to sin; that it involves our being crucified and buried with Christ, that it is the mortification of sin, the sharing of His agony, and the participation of the soul in His death. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." A true and deep faith in Christ, a recognition by mind and heart of the work of Christ, is such an intuition of law, such a sense of God, such a revelation of the evil of sin, such a burning of the heart against self and the flesh, and the world and the devil, that the Apostle was justified in saying, that through faith in Christ our Lord, Roman Christians might reckon themselves dead unto sin.

II. The union between Christ and the believer in His life and resurrection.

(1) This is more obvious, for Christ is the revelation of the Father, the organ and chief minister of God; the highest manifestation of the righteousness, of the mercy, of the wisdom and truth of God. By faith in Him we have the highest opportunities for the recognition of the character and nature of God. Christ is not a rival to the God of nature and providence; if He were so, if the Christian consciousness had made of Him a second God, if the Catholic Church had suffered the Gnostic schism in the Di-

vine manifestation and ~~attributes~~ to have stolen into its creed, if the Arian delusion had not been driven off from the Church by deeper views of both God and man, the language of my text would have been very perplexing. As it is, Christ is no rival to God. The Divine element in the Christ is the eternal Son of God; the whole of the Divine nature manifests itself to us under the aspect of the eternal Son. God is manifest therefore in the flesh. The Word that is God has been incarnate, and "we have beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we are alive to God, because it is in Him that we can "see the Father," and because "no man knoweth the Son but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him."

(2) Faith in Christ is, further, a resurrection with Christ from the death unto sin. The illustrations which Paul draws from the resurrection of Christ to throw light on our divine life, are very numerous. The new life of the soul is a resurrection-life, charged with all the associations and aspirations which would be possessed by one who had passed, through dying, from death to life.

(3) The life *unto* God flows out of the life *of* God in the soul. It cannot be that the life of the soul will be characterized by these deep perceptions of God, that the delighting in God, resting in God, hoping in God, of which we intend to speak to you,

can be the characteristics of the human spirit unless God Himself create within us the new life by His Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the dispensation of the exalted Christ. The new germ of life in our humanity is planted there by the risen Jesus. The new vision of God is the work of Him who is the life of our life, the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

SERMON III.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

GALATIANS III. 28.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

THE word 'unity' is ambiguous and difficult to define. It may mean merely the numerical basis of calculation; the contrast between one thing and two or more things of the same kind. But if used in the sense of a unit, it is clear that every one thing is made up of many parts, possesses many qualities, stands in various relations, and though in itself only one thing, is also a part of many other things. By unity is often meant more than the antithesis of many. Though the unity of God means that there is only one God, in opposition to the claims of lords many and gods many, yet the phrase implies that whatever internal distinctions there may be in the essence of the Most High, that essence is one essence—a whole, a unity in itself. Unity is individuality in spite of the recognition of the multiplicity of elements of which it is compounded. Thus a crystal of quartz of any magnitude is a unity

distinct from all other crystals. It is one thing, as distinct from the hand that holds it, or the sun that shines upon it. It possesses a multitude of curious properties as long as it remains that one thing, pure and simple, undivided, and unanalyzed. But let me dash it on a rock and break it into a thousand pieces, large or small, and it might soon be proved that every fragment, even to the minutest dust of quartz adhering to each one of the particles, was preserving the same peculiar shape as the original unbroken crystal, and possessed in its measure all its properties. Yet these fragments, though many, previously formed one whole. Consider, again, a tree or plant; its root and stem, its branches and leaves, and flowers and seed form one whole of mysterious beauty; and though each twig and leaflet is a perfect creation, having an independent life in itself, yet the many parts do not fail to form a well-appreciated and comprehended unity. Further, playing in the branches of this tree there is a world of more mysterious life. Every leaf has its colony of insects, every bough its parasitical growth; the bees are humming in its fragrant flowers, and the birds are building their nests in its branches. But each lichen and moss, each insect and animalcule, each bee and bird, is as wonderful in its mysterious combination of many opposites, and subordinate and dependent structures, and wondrous balancing of powers, as was the forest tree itself. But while I am considering crystal and tree, and insect and

bird, I find that I myself am just such a combination of many parts, faculties, passions, and relations, each of which is sufficiently individual, and yet the whole of which seem all but indispensable to constitute my self-conscious unity. I am a strange combination of body, soul, and spirit; and yet I am reckoned as one man in this world of ours. My senses, reflections, and passions, my body, understanding, and will, seem at times capable of individualization, and to be unities in themselves; but it is the mutual relation and dependence of the parts that constitute the unity of the whole.

With this self-consciousness of multiplicity in unity to help me, the revelation that the blessed God has made of His threefold nature is less perplexing than it otherwise would be. The unity of the Divine nature, like the unity of all other things, is a unity consistent with the self-inclusion of various constituent elements. In the case of the Divine Being, the unity and the multiplicity are more expressly intimated and maintained than in any other unity, so that we actually use words which seem almost self-contradictory in order adequately to express that wondrous "unity in Trinity" which "neither divides the substance nor confounds the persons" of the adorable Godhead. But it is not only true that human nature, and that the nature of the blessed God are alike both "Trinities in unity, and unities in Trinity;" but it is revealed as a grand possibility, that man's will may become one with God's will. It

is certain that the Son of God, when also son of man did cry from the depths of His human nature, "Thy will be done;" and He has by His Spirit taught us that we may attain such conformity to His own image, that, whatsoever we ask; He is prepared to do it even for us. The great work of Christ is to reconcile the world to God; to open up the way of access unto the Father; to make manifest the way into the holiest of all; to teach the poor trembling spirit of man to cry, "Not my will, but Thine be done." The redeemed are one with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The life of the Christian is a manifestation of the mind of God. It would be impossible to say where the life of the individual ends and the life of God commences. "He worketh within us both to will and to do," and we are "filled with all the fullness of God."

If it be true that there are many souls, a multitude whom no man can number brought into living harmony and unity with God, who are "partakers of the Divine nature," sons and heirs of God through Jesus Christ, it is reasonable to suppose that they would also be, in some true and comprehensible sense, one with each other. This is, at least, their profession. This was the prayer of the Divine Son; "that they all might be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also might be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." This is a grand and sublime conception which some hope to realize in a distinct, visible, exclusive corpo-

ration, or body of men who have lost their personal differences, and have become parts of one vast and mysterious whole, all merging their individualities in the unity of the Catholic and indivisible Church, which is purchased with the blood of the Lamb. Nor is this conception a hopeless one, if it be rightly understood. We know how by the power of love many discordant and varying elements can be brought into holy accord, and that the great watchword of the ransomed is "Peace on earth, goodwill to man." It is reasonable to hope that when the common danger has driven all classes of men to one shelter, and heavily-laden souls find in the recognition of their personal relation to the eternal Son of God the hope of deliverance from the burden of sin and from the misery of existence, they may sink all personal differences and hush all mutual strife, and prove to the wide universe that they are all one in Christ Jesus. Beautiful, reasonable, sublime as is the idea of a Catholic unity, undisturbed from the moment when the 'two or three' first gathered in the name of Jesus and found Him in the midst of them; the historian of human life and progress has a sad and melancholy task when he turns from the idea to the reality. Alas! the fiercest strifes among men have been quickened by the dove-like spirit of the gospel. Hostility, schism, misapprehension, mutual exclusion from the benefits of the Divine Father's love, hatred, persecution, martyrdoms are the strange accompaniments of the religion of love. Not content with words, not satisfied with

sword and fire, and deadly rage, those who should all have been one in Christ Jesus have actually called hell from beneath to do their hateful bidding on their foes, and done their best to blast the eternal life of each other, with threats and execrations, savouring more of Pandemonium than of the Church of the living God. Is Christianity then a mistake? is Christian love an impossibility? is it only a dream of the enthusiast, never to be realized on earth? God forbid! There is another way of looking even at some of these facts, which—whatever may be the profession of any one party, however deeply a man may be cursed, even for the charity that “hopeth all things, endureth all things, believeth all things”—may make each one of us a part of this undivided whole. In order that we may rise to the point of view where we may contemplate the life of God in the soul as independent of the fundamental distinctions arising among men, let us consider those distinctions, and the classes of difficulties which are placed in the way of all fellowship and unity of whatever kind, and which will therefore make their appearance within the bosom even of the one mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three classes of obstacles to all union, and therefore to Christian union, and to the realization of the wondrous prayer of the Lord Jesus. These difficulties arise out of a threefold distinction that may be made among human beings. The Apostle Paul, in my text, does in three different ways divide mankind. He makes a threefold sepa-

ration of the human race into two dissimilar classes, which, though here and there correspondent with one another, are by no means parallel the one to the other. This classification is governed by (1) the great intellectual differences and antagonisms among men ; (2) the chief emotional and constitutional differences of character, and (3) the prodigious distinctions effected by external circumstances. It is true that St. Paul presents these three antitheses in a pictorial fashion, in a vivid and concrete form before our consideration, but it is none the less obvious that he is thinking of more than the literal meaning of his own words.

I. The first of these divisions was based on that great antagonism which was so admirably expressed in the Apostle's day by the intellectual differences obtaining between the Jew and the Greek. The Jew, strictly speaking, was the member of the holy family, the descendant of Abraham and Israel, a representative of that well-known nationality which had better reasons than any other Oriental people possessed, to believe that it was the special object of Divine care, and providence, and government. The Jew justly gloried in a marvellous history of sublime and matchless deeds; he could boast the possession of a literature which was absolutely peerless in its moral teaching, in its combination of the human and the divine, in its surprising details of deliverance, in its sacred minstrelsy, and in its power to arouse and to soothe the conscience, to wound and to heal the heart. He could claim that the first

appearance in human literature of a distinct recognition of the unity of God was found in his sacred books; he could point to his Bible and his history for the only rational explanation of sacrifice, the only adequate presentation of worship; and he was the subject of a marvellous hope that the whole world would accept his traditions, submit to his ritual, receive his dogmas, and ultimately yield to his sway. He promised to mankind its greatest King, its perfect sacrifice, its universal temple. By psalmist and chronicler, by sybil and seer, by ceremony and prophecy, he foretold a Messiah, a religion, a redemption, a resurrection to his fellow-man. Like the bush which burned with fire and was unconsumed, none of the terrible reverses which befel his country crushed his confidence in his creed, or extinguished the hope of his race. In St. Paul's day the Jew was a settler in all the commercial cities and chief resorts of the Roman empire, and became a world-wide witness for the covenant which God had made with his nation and the world. The blandishments of philosophy and luxury, the insults of tyrannic fanaticism, the despotism of bad rulers, and the intestine strife of his own people, did not obliterate the pages of his Bible, or succeed in changing his national characteristics. Wherever we find him, we see the same tenacious adherence to traditional observance, the same pride of birth, and some of the same dogmatism and impatience of novelty. Living in the past, glorying in the sense of an infallible wisdom, satis-

fied with self, convinced of the justness of his own ideas, with limited though suggestive views of the character of God and the mode of His revelation, he laid down *à priori* principles for the divine procedure; and in face of a world in arms, maintained the ground which had been won for him by the heroism, the great deeds, and greater faith of his ancestors.

Now Christianity is a glorification, a transfiguration of Judaism. Judaism was a long, predestined, divine preparation for the coming of the Son of David; and the Jew often accepted the Christ as such, not always fully understanding that the Son of David was the Son of man, that Jesus could not be the Son of man without being indeed the Son of God. When the Jew entered the Christian church, he brought with him his age-long attachment to the external rite, to the holy place, to the consecrated thing, to the traditional dogma. While the Apostles reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the Jew was saying to his fellow-believers, "Except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." While the great gospel of pardon was proclaimed through the blood of the Lamb, the Jew was seeking a sign. Amid the convulsions which rocked his nation to its foundation, levelled his temple and his hopes to the ground, proved the baselessness of many of his demands and professions, and gave the great sign that the end of the old mode of recognising the divine kingdom was nigh, and that the

Son of man had indeed come, with power and glory, and been brought near to the Ancient of Days,—the Jew was quibbling about the forms of the faith, giving heed to fables and endless genealogies, trying to resist the progress of ideas, and to limit the grace of God.

Thus the Jew became the type of all who in every age of the Church are by their education, their mental habits, their strong dispositions, disposed to lay violent stress on the external sign, on the tangible symbol, on the sacramental test, on the old tradition, on the long-maintained and accepted dogma, even to the exclusion of the realities which are indicated by them. He was in St. Paul's day a prophetic picture of the great multitude of Christian people, who though they may have life in Christ, and though they are alive to God through Jesus Christ, yet rest on the symbol, on the thing, on the supernatural portent, on the external evidence, on the appeal to the senses, on the infallible authority of Church or Creed or Bible, and are disposed to exclude from their fellowship, to denounce as unchristian or ungodly, those who do not and cannot see with them eye to eye, face to face. Without that which is to them the great warrant and stimulus of faith, they would be tossed on the hopeless sea of doubt; and those who are not guided by them, sheltered with them in this one ark, whatever be its form, they regard as suicidal shipwrecked mariners, hopelessly doomed to eternal perdition.

Now let us look at the other great type of intellectual character—the *Greek*. The term, even in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere in the New Testament, meant more than a Gentile proselyte to the faith of Christ; and the word ‘Grecian’ or ‘Hellenist’ meant more than a Greek-speaking Jew. It is capable of proof that there was in Judaism a Grecized party even before the time of our Lord, and it is quite clear that the Grecian converts to the faith of Jesus were rather characterized by the freshness of their ideas, the freedom of their speculations, the liberty which they claimed from oppressive rite and ceremonial, than by their mother-tongue. No classes of mind could be more directly opposed and dissimilar in their modes of working than those of the pure Jew and pure Greek. To Jewish conservatism the Greek opposed an incessant love of change; to the Jewish love of tradition and dependence upon the wisdom of the ancients the Greek offered endless speculation and elaborate guesses after truth; instead of the Jewish dogma the Greek luxuriated in the last logical puzzle. By the side of the stern exclusiveness of the Jewish Monotheism, the Greek prided himself in a Pantheon of deities, who were admitted on equal and easy terms to the reverence of the Hellenes. The mind of the Jew was hampered in its philosophical researches by a language of great metrical power, but of comparative rigidity of movement and excessive externality and objectivity; the Greek used the most flexible and delicate instrument of thought which human

minds had ever fashioned. The Jew accepted the supernatural with child-like simplicity, and asked eagerly for more; the Greek sought after the causes of things, the meaning of words, the essence of government, the unseen and intangible realities. It is not a wonderful thing that St. Paul should have said, "The Jew requires a sign, the Greek seeks after wisdom." The unrestrained liberty of the Greek was not without its serious dangers, when it was brought by Divine Grace within the limit of the true Church. He who had never kept a Sabbath, might be slow to understand any way of entering into God's rest; he who had always fashioned his dogmas and philosophy for himself, might find it difficult to accept any truth which he could not verify; he whose scepticism of error and superstition amounted to a passion, might become flippant and unbelieving in face of the great mysteries of life and revelation; he who was accustomed to try and reduce to the forms of his philosophy all his passions and his ideas, would be tempted, as were Greek theologians in the first ages of the Church, to try and explain and define the transcendental facts of the holy religion of Jesus, until Christian doctrine was overlaid with a thick incrustation of philosophic speculation and angry debate.

The Greek, in the Churches of Galatia and Corinth and Rome, was a striking type of the class of Christian men at the present time, whose mental constitution, habits, and education almost lead them

in their hatred of superstition to discourage faith, and to denounce the letter, and the body, and the form of truth so harshly, as to shatter the costly vase which contains its fragrant essence; who are so well satisfied with the lean results of human reason as to resist the voice of the Eternal Word; whose positive science leaves no place for the revelation of truth to the world; who are so eager in their maintenance of personal freedom, and conscience, and responsibility as to become utterly isolated in their judgments. If the two types of mental character of which I have spoken be found within the Church of Christ, we may expect sharp and sustained antagonism. Even regeneration will not change these grave and fundamental differences of mental constitution. How difficult must it ever prove for these two kinds of men to feel the deep-hidden unity which is possible between them! To put the matter in a concrete form, how difficult for one who imagines religious life to be inseparably associated with form, ceremonial, priesthood, sacraments, liturgies, elaborate dogmatic creeds and transcendental propositions, even to believe in the Christianity of another, whose only notion of it is a holy life, free from all these restraints; who thinks, speculates, philosophizes, and tries to prove all things, and only to hold fast that which is good! Verily, if these tendencies are left to themselves unchecked and unchastised, very distant will be the day when Jew and Greek shall be *one*.

I must describe with greater brevity the two other

classifications which the Apostle makes of our humanity.

II. The *second* of them is, the great constitutional and emotional difference of character expressed by the antithesis of male and female. It is not merely the difference of sex of which the Apostle is speaking, but rather of the great types of character, which though not confined to either sex are best expressed by the terms *masculine* and *feminine*. By *masculine* character we mean the predominance over the passions of reason and conscience, the energy of will, the submission to law, the conscious pride of independence, strength, selfsufficiency, robust and vigorous life. By *feminine* character, whether seen in woman or man, we mean the predominance of the affections, the delight of dependence, the unreasoning consciousness of right, the strength of submission, the power of suffering, selfsacrifice, and waiting. In the one there is more power to act, in the other to endure. The strength of the one is energy, and of the other is rest. Both may be led to do what is good; but the one because it is right, and the other because it is lovely. The one looks at religion as a system of principles, the other as the expression of deep feelings. The one sees no religion in mere states of mind, devotional postures, strong sentiments; and the other cannot understand the religion of mere principle and energy. The one is roused to action by the records of the conflict of David or Paul, and rises from the perusal of the struggles of

Bunyan or ~~Luther~~ with fresh zeal for God; the other ~~reposes~~ with Mary at the feet of Jesus, and having chosen the better part, will not have it taken away. The one, in the hour of spiritual depression, would rush into the world of action, bear burdens, do difficult things, and become all things to all men, so that by any means he might glorify God; the other will steal away into secrecy, where the love-laden soul may hold intercourse with the Bridegroom of the Church, and pour out its sorrows and joys into the ear of Heaven, for the mere luxury of doing it. The one is a servant toiling for an absent Master, the other is a virgin waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom. How shall these two perpetually reappearing types of character ever be harmonized? Where is the link that shall make both of these one? Since they do exist, can we wonder that the prayer is long in being heard, "That they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee."

III. The third great division is that due to differences arising out of external circumstances. *The bond and the free* are the terms which Paul uses to describe this great contrast. It is the hope of this generation that the curse of our race, which has so long been protected under the shadow of Christianity, shall become a thing of the past. The Roman empire presented the worst specimens of slavery of which we have any knowledge. Down to the reign of Hadrian the slave property of the Roman citizen consisted of the captives taken in war, of men and

women whose cultivation and affections and manners were often of a higher class than that which their owners could lay claim to; and these were the victims of lust and rapacity, were compelled to become prostitutes or gladiators at their victors' caprice; and were often crucified out of mere whim. Modern slavery has not been so offensively iniquitous as was the Roman slavery, but it has cried aloud to Heaven for vengeance, and at length has begun to stink in the nostrils of mankind. England has led the vanguard in the crusade against it, Mohammedan Turkey and the autocrat of all the Russias have followed the example; and now we have seen the great nation of the far West arising up like a strong man after sleep to wipe out, though in tears and blood, this black stain on its fair fame.

But though formal slavery be abolished, the distinction between different classes of men is not obliterated. Caste still prevails in India; the difference between the black negro and the Southern planter or Northern merchant will still abide in America. The struggle between capital and labour, and the contrast between rank and wealth and power on the one hand, poverty, dependence and obscurity on the other, are as vigorous and obvious as they ever were. How hard it is to bridge the gulf between the lordly owner of a county and the half-clad, unclean, besotted, diseased inmate of some hovel within sight of his palace! How difficult to make even Christian people lay down their pride, and their caste, and love one

another with a pure heart fervently! Legislation, common griefs and joys, healthful literature, and free press, are bringing these separated classes into one another's view, and some of the reserve and mutual antipathy may be overcome in the foremost of the nations; but still within the Church, as well as outside its pale, there are the bond and the free. There are visible on all side of us men who are born slaves; who never will, not to say never can, emerge from the condition of dependence, poverty, and weakness; who will be the property of those who are possessed of the power to rule them. The interests of the bondsmen and the freemen are really identical, yet they are always being brought into competition. Now these fundamental differences in condition have always been found within the Church, and they still remain there to distract the faith and interfere with the harmony of the body of Christ. How full the Epistles of St. Paul were of principles intended to reconcile the master and the slave, to adjust the relations of the rich and poor Christian, to reveal the sublime truth of the unity of human blood, and the grandeur of the humanity shared by king and peasant, lord and slave! From that day to this, in East and West, the Church has suffered deeply from these sources of division; and so the mighty unity of the many discordant elements of human life is slow of realization. "The Jew and the Greek, the male and the female, the bond and the free," represent tendencies to individualization, to divergence, to schism, to divided

organization, to clashing interests, to misrepresentation, mutual distrust, and antagonism. Sometimes even within the bosom of the Church they have been aggravated by direct combination, and sometimes neutralized by being differently arranged; and so it has come to pass that we have within the Church of Christ the princely hierarch and the humble disbeliever in any priest or king lower and less than Christ Jesus; we have all the difference represented by the spirit of the convent and that of the battle-field; we have the Puritan and the Pope. There are strange inconsistencies and discords due to the various combinations of these elements of human nature, but I believe there is after all in the religion, nay in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the true point of contact for them all, and a degree and sense in which we may see even now, that in Him there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but that all are one. It is to this that I now call your attention; and desire to shew,—

(1) That the intellectual antagonism between Jew and Greek, of every age and Church, finds in Christ its true counteraction. It is true that the Jew requires a sign and the Greek seeks after wisdom, and that to meet each requisition the gospel of Christ crucified is preached. Now what is the consequence? Let the Apostle Paul inform us. As long as the Jew remains unbelieving and unregenerate, to him the person and cross of Christ is a stumbling-block, and he stumbles at this stumbling-stone. As long as the

Greek folds himself in the garment of his own pride, and refuses to hear the truth, he derides and scorns the cross as folly. But let both perceive in the cross of Jesus its true meaning, and each will find in it what he was seeking so eagerly and hopelessly elsewhere. In it the Jew sees all the 'sign' of heavenly presence and power that he needs. In the cross he beholds the climax and the crisis of his national glory and disgrace, and he sees at once the curse and hope of mankind. The deluge of Noah and the thunders of Sinai do not speak more solemnly to him of righteousness; all the sacrifices of the temple service, all the hecatombs of bleeding lambs, all the smoke of the burnt-offerings, and all the shadowy procession of his ancestral priests from Aaron to Caiaphas, do not reveal to him now, so much of God the Father and the King, as that one cross. The modern representative of the Jew within the Church, when he looks through the form and the letter, and the medium and the visible sign, to the reality which makes him *Christian*, heartily confesses that it is Christ crucified who satisfies his search. He finds in the God-man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who "suffered death upon the cross for our redemption, who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the whole world"—that which gives to his sacrament, to his Bible, to his creed, to his Church and priesthood, all their meaning, all their value to him. Like the Jew who

saw in the death of the Prince of Life the reason for the deepest confession and liveliest gratitude, he cries,—‘Here is the finger of God, here is the irrevocable dogma, here is the supernatural portent, here is the sacrifice and the sacrament, here is the grandest tradition, here is the substance of the oldest creed; here is all that my spirit searches after, or can ever want.’ But from another quarter, both in the Apostle’s time, and also in ours, comes the Greek. Here is the man whose danger is to despise all form, and hate all ceremony. He does not ask for a creed, but a reason. He does not seek a sign, but he yearns with a mighty, morbid, mad hunger after ‘wisdom.’ Sacraments will not melt his emotions nor help his faith. Whatever he believes must in some form take the colour and shape of his own mind. What has the Apostle to say to the wisdom of this world, that by itself has come so often to nothing? He has the same proposal to make, he still preaches Christ and Him crucified. At first that which was to the Jew a “stumbling-block” is to him a “folly;” but see, the Greek of Paul’s time and of every successive age has looked more deeply at this truth. He is not terrified by the portent, he does not notice the supernatural darkness, nor the rending of the graves; he is not much moved by the wondrous preparation made in far-off millenniums for the accomplishment of this unique fact; but he sees that the Incarnation of God, the absolute union and reconciliation of the Divine and the human, the dream of his own religions and

the aim of his philosophies, is more clearly realized in the life and death of the Nazarene than in all that he had ever imagined before. Christ is "made of God to him wisdom and righteousness." He is thenceforth to him not only the "power of God, but the wisdom of God." He finds a deeper satisfaction to his intellect than logic can ever present to him. The truth of God and man, of sin and suffering, of life and death, are revealed to him; and he is at peace, and like a little child, he enters into the kingdom of heaven. The Jew and Greek of St. Paul's day meet before the cross. 'Come,' says the Hebrew of Hebrews to the sinner of the Gentiles,—'Come, brother; thou who wert afar off, art made nigh by the blood of Jesus. "He is our peace, who has made both of us one, and hath broken down the wall of partition between us." Let thee and me clasp hands before the cross, for we two have access by one Spirit unto the Father.' And the Greek responds, 'I verily am no more stranger or foreigner, but a fellow-heir and of the same body, and partaker of Divine promise.' There is now neither Jew nor Greek; they are *both one* in Christ Jesus. In like manner if the Jew and Greek of these days will look on and up to the great uniting principle of holy life and truth in the person and sacrifice of the Christ, they will clasp inseparable hands, and antedate the harmonies of heaven.

(2) Christ Jesus is the mediating power between the masculine and feminine mind. Christ is the well-spring of the strong motives to right action and of

the deepest passions of holy love. As the mountain-torrent may leap with wild pomp and energy from the same water-shed from which by a quieter transit other and a gentle stream may wind its way to the great ocean, "reflecting far and fairy-like from high the immortal lights which live along the sky," so too from the same fountain of deep emotions and great purposes varied lives may flow. As the two streams of water mingle at length, to do ever after a united work, so the two classes of mind, when they learn the lesson that from the one Christ they both derive their life and hope, then, "like friends once parted, grown single hearted," their love begins to abound. They cease to misconceive and misunderstand each other, they present the diversity which can only proceed from inner unity; each is ever giving to and each receiving from the other, the distinction between them is lost, and both are one in Christ Jesus. The gentler spirit says, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and manly courage whispers to womanly trust, 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved. O rest in the Lord, and while I fight the battle, do thou wait patiently for Him!'

(3) The bond and free are more truly one in Christ Jesus than in any other thought or relation whatsoever.

The common dependence on the infinite mercy of God in Christ, if really felt, is the true counteraction of all pride. Christ has not destroyed the relation-

ships of human life. He has sanctified them. When men are consciously journeying in one narrow path, they cannot be far from each other. The slave lifts up his fetters, and he finds that he is the Lord's free man. The free man is bold to acknowledge himself the Lord's slave. The child hears the patriarch cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" and the rich man joins the poor man, and the peasant the prince, to plead for the same mercy. At the table of the Lord, the "body broken" is given to all alike. The same provision is made for priest and people, for pastor and flock, for philosopher and little child; and all confess their equal and utter nothingness in the presence of the Saviour. So that in Christ Jesus it is possible, it is theoretically true, that all are one. This is at least the sublime possibility. This is the mode of the answer to the Saviour's prayer. Deep down behind the external differences, there is a luxury for all true Christian minds in the thought of the common unity. The holy life has many forms. The life of God takes many names. Let not Judah vex Ephraim; let not Jew exclude Greek from his fellowship; let not the servant toiling with the talent despise him that watches and stands and waits; let not the rich man glory in his riches, nor the wise man in his wisdom, but let each glory in the Lord. And so let Christ become all and in all.

SERMON IV.

THE GREAT PARADOX.

MATTHEW XL 25, 26.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in Thy sight.

THESE very exact expressions of our Divine Master have been applied to circumstances and to characters, and even to classes of opinion, with which they have no concern whatever. Ignorant men have argued from them that sound knowledge is utterly incompatible with the child-like spirit, that information which modifies the reception of certain statements, or demands a new interpretation of them, is thereby inconsistent with real faith, and virtually undermines the moral conditions of all higher knowledge. Men who have been plunging into the depths of Christian metaphysics, and have held to be true the most difficult if not the least comprehensible doctrines of Christian and Catholic theology, have claimed for themselves the character of child-likeness; have called themselves "babes in Christ," and have refused

that name to others who by reason of their reverence for truth have never ventured into such sublime discussions. Thus it has become very easy to affix the one term as a stigma, and the other as a seal of Heaven's approbation; not on distinct moral qualities, but on religious opinions which it has been sought thus either to refute or to confirm.

Again, it is easy to forget the grave importance of these words, and to ignore their solemn lessons; it is possible to forget in the wisdom of this world, Him whom the world by wisdom never knew; to invert the grand conditions of all knowledge, to over-estimate that which philosophy or science may bring within the field of our view, by underrating that which to childlike obedience and trust is already known.

Our Lord always uttered His most comprehensive and weighty words when He permitted His disciples to listen to His communings with the Father. Ere the veil of His flesh had been rent in twain, and before the holy burnt-offering of His soul had been consumed by the fire of heaven, the great High Priest entered often into the holy place. No man ascended into that awful secrecy save He who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who was indeed ever in heaven. When He lifted up His eye, when He spake unto God, and allowed His communion with God to touch the deafened ear of man, then His disciples learnt most of Him and of the Father. His intercourse with God, His appeals to the Father

seem to be less restrained than does His converse with man; in this glorious exercise He was most tranquil, most at home. When mysterious troublings passed over His soul, it was thus that He received consolation, and thus that He "rejoiced in spirit." It was in prayer that He gave us to know the glory of His transfiguration, the agony of His sacrifice, His own deepest self-consciousness, and the nature of His highest work. Is it not true, my brethren, that we know more of one another when we pray together than when we try to teach each other? We understand, or rather feel more distinctly the unity of our Christian faith when we weep over sin and struggle together after light, than when we write or read books, than when we preach or hear sermons. It is in prayer that we put the very essence of our faith to the test and find out the worth to us of our God, and really measure such sense of emptiness and wretchedness, such aspirations after fulness of joy and true holiness, such communion with the Father as He may deign to vouchsafe to us. How many walls of partition have thus been broken down! How many veils have been rent in twain! How many wicked uncharitable feelings checked when men have bared their hearts together before God's piteous and holy eye! This may help us to understand how we get to know so much of Christ from those mere fragments of His priestly intercessions; those audible communings of His mighty spirit with the Father, which the Holy Ghost has recorded. It

is then that we discover His sympathy; that we see His brotherhood, and that we feel His divinity. On the mount of transfiguration, at the grave of Lazarus, in His mighty works, amid His deepest agonies, during the night of His betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane, on the cross itself we hear some whispers of these thoughts of His, which have bound men to each other as well as to Him, and linked this much-wandering and unhappy world of ours to the throne of God. The passage I have read as my text is, I believe, the earliest record of this audible communion between Christ and the Father. It was one of the first of these instructive and redemptive acts. It was not petition, but submission; it was not that He needed aught, but that He had learned obedience, and in this matter did Himself adore the perfections of God, and offered up praise to the will and the good pleasure of the Lord of heaven and earth. He suffered His disciples to follow Him, to enter by faith within the veil of His flesh, into the sanctuary of His spirit, and to learn something of the rest and peace and joy of God.

“Jesus answered and said.” It is true that this word is not infrequently used by the Evangelist without his stating the previous words or circumstances to which the answer may be supposed to be given. Whatever may be the explanation of this usage of words elsewhere, the interpretation here is obvious. The language of rebuke in which the Saviour had dealt with the unbelief and unspiri-

tuality of the people of Israel was grieving His own spirit. He had been troubled with the contrast between the fewness and simplicity of His followers, and the superstitions and traditions, the learning, pride, vice, and power, which were arrayed against Him; but the Divine Spirit had spoken within Him; the deep sources of consolation had welled up from within Him, the radiance of God's smile had lighted up His soul, and in answer to the divine assurance, in response to all the querulousness of humanity, or to the wonder and anger which He could sometimes feel at the unbelief of His hearers, he uttered this unparalleled, divine, and inexhaustible saying, which we can feel better than we can interpret, which we can never overload with adoring gratitude, and which has done as much to humble the pride and heal the broken hearts of men as all other influences combined. We will consider,—

I. The apparent paradox involved in these words.

II. The Redeemer's judgment, and gratitude concerning it.

I. The great paradox:—"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes." All revelation is to some extent a concealment. The veil is ever being drawn aside, but it is never taken away. We see gradually enlarging portions of the awful face of truth, but there is always much concealed. Wherever we take our stand, our own shadow will fall on the glorious countenance. Every new piece of information that we

acquire, every fresh relation that we discover, makes us more conscious of our ignorance. The belt of light thrown over some divisions of the great sphere of knowledge leaves the rest in apparently deeper shade. All language by expressing some thoughts conceals many others. Much is repressed by every effort that we make towards expression. If we try to unbosom our hearts to each other, we hide as much as we reveal. We wrap ourselves round in mystery when we are most communicative. All art is concerned as much in hiding what ought to be concealed as in making known what is meant to be expressed. When an Infinite God reveals Himself to man, by a necessity of our nature He hides far more than He manifests. That which is unrevealed must always be greater than that which is made known. "My Father," said Christ, "is greater than I."

But farther, the special revelation which God has made to some individuals, is the very process by which He has concealed Himself from others; for there are two grand conditions of divine revelation by which God brings His own truth, the truth of His own holiness and love, to bear upon the human heart. The external circumstance and event which He has taught us to consider as a special communication from Him on the one hand, and the mental pre-requisites, subjective state, or moral condition capable of receiving a divine communication on the other hand. So far as we can understand it, there

can be no special revelation to any man without a willingness on God's part to confer upon some events or some great teacher his own authorization, and a willingness on man's part to receive the revelation as such. Therefore the revelation made to some is necessarily a concealment from others. If certain events have happened which have revealed God in a special way to our race, then the limitation of this disclosure to a certain nation or period in the world's history, while it has revealed it to the shepherds of Bethlehem or the fishermen of Galilee, has to that extent, and for a while, hidden it from the princes of the East and the philosophers of Greece. If God's revelation has been made to certain nations, and if He is educating our race by conferring special and peculiar functions on different nations of men, then the process has been one of election upon the grand scale, and He whose love has revealed itself to some has concealed itself from others. If, too, this was to be part of God's deep and merciful design, and if it was most consistent with His glory to reveal Himself specially to individuals and tribes of the human family at a great central epoch and place on the world's surface, then it has also been His glory to conceal this knowledge of Himself from others until in the progress of His salvation and grace all the nations should walk in the light of it.

Again, the revelation though made, needed, as we have said, special eyes, ears, minds, and hearts to receive it. It is reasonable to suppose that if God has

revealed Himself to man, there must be certain conditions of mind and heart which would accept the revelation, while others would reject or fail to perceive it. It must be so, unless when once presented to the human mind, all men are equally qualified to accept it, and all conditions of the understanding and emotions are equally receptive; a position which is manifestly absurd. Unless it be so, some men are inevitably in a better position to see this great sight, or hear this great voice, or appreciate this great revelation than others are; and the revelation made to some implies concealment from others. It becomes, then, of tremendous importance to us to know what is the disposition which most of all fits us for the reception of the divine message, and assists us to know and feel the sublime facts and promises which are freely given to us of God. It is of the first importance that we discover whether this reception depends chiefly upon the condition of our understanding or the feelings of our heart; whether Christian truth and assurance find readier access into an enlightened head than into an open heart; whether extensive information or childlike feelings, whether wide sweep of intellect or humble obedience, filial docility or submissive trust, are the surest conditions of success. It becomes of high importance to us to ascertain this, because we may rest assured that whatever process is required to make known God's truth to the one, will virtually hide it from all the others; for that which recommends itself as

desirable to the critical and highly-informed man, may be incomprehensible to the simple trusting heart; and on the other hand, that which abundantly satisfies the childlike soul, may be encumbered with difficulties to the cautious student or sceptical judge. Now Christ answered this great question for us when He said, "He that doeth the will of My Father that is in heaven, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." "How can ye believe," said He on another occasion, "who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" In both instances the *moral* condition is the true pre-requisite of faith. The childlike trust of the Syro-Phenician woman, the implicit obedience which the Roman centurion felt to belong to the very essence of faith, secures the Saviour's regard, and His favourable contrast with the lean and narrow-minded learning of turbaned scribes, who by their miserable traditions and vain interpretations were making void the Law of God. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God," said He to the disciples who were striving after pre-eminence in His kingdom. The same teaching pervades the Sermon on the Mount. There, it is "the poor in spirit" who possess the kingdom of heaven; the "mourners who are comforted;" the "meek who inherit the earth;" the "hungry who are satisfied;" the "pure in heart who see their God;" and, in fact, throughout His ministry our Lord implies that to

give His revelation to the wise, or His consolations to the satisfied, His pardon to the righteous, His healing to those who are whole, or His welcome to those who with estranged heart say they never at any time transgressed His commandments, is purely impossible, for it is to give to those who will not receive. The revelation made of the Father by the Son can only be received into childlike hearts. It is the Spirit of the Son shed abroad in the heart which makes Him known. This is a fact that has been conspicuous in every age of the Church. If wise men receive the revelation of Christ, it is not as wise and prudent men, but as little children. Their other knowledge has been illumined by their higher spiritual wisdom. When once they have gazed into the countenance of Jesus, they have found a new measure of all other knowledge. The babe can accept the great truths of the gospel as well as the strong man. The facts and truths of our moral nature, of our need, of our danger, the means of our renewal, the high inducements offered to the sincere believer in Christ, all take as free and full a possession of the little child as of the most cultivated and powerful mind. The highest revelations of God are made to our moral nature, have to do with the points in our being where we resemble Him, and are capable of bearing His image and reproducing His likeness. It may be a trembling and even a mortifying thing to witness the superior moral power of the childlike mind and heart, the profounder and more

practical knowledge of God possessed by the babe in Christ, than by the most highly cultivated man who has never known the virtue of submission, nor felt the emotions of a child, nor displayed the courage of faith. It may be very mortifying that the faculties on which we pride ourselves most highly should have comparatively so little to do with securing the greatest result; that those intellectual qualifications which have created among us a higher aristocracy than that which office, or birth, or riches, or physical strength ever conferred; that those glorious powers which are capable of threading the dark labyrinths of nature, scaling its loftiest mountains, and exploring distant worlds,—which leave no portion of the universe uninterrogated, and diligently garner all that the great fields of nature offer to the reaper of truth,—should not be the qualifications by which God reveals to His children that which the eye does not see, nor the ear hear, nor even the heart conceive. It may be very mortifying when the classes of men who might, according to our feeble sight, make very short work with the ignorance of the world, hesitate so long to accept it, and perhaps at last refuse it; when the child outstrips the philosopher, even at his own business, and the humble heart knows more than the massive intellect. Yet, mortifying as it may be, nothing can be more patent. The cross is always not only the stumbling-block to the Jew, but folly to the Greek; all the world over it is the child, the youngest, the simple mind; the woman with her large

heart; the soul bleeding over losses; the lover kneeling at a grave; the eye preternaturally sharpened to see spiritual things by the near approach of the invisible world, that receives the things which are freely given to it of God. But if it be so, then these things are hidden from the wise and prudent. He comes now that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.

Having stated the seeming paradox, let us consider,—

II. The Redeemer's judgment, and gratitude concerning it.

(1) He attributes this arrangement to the universal Lord. "O Lord of heaven and earth," "Thou hast hidden,"—"Thou hast revealed." This is not merely an interesting fact which we may be called on to explain; it is not a reason for undervaluing or doubting the things themselves; but our Lord deliberately throws the responsibility of the paradox upon the Universal King and Ruler of All; upon Him who takes the most comprehensive view of man; who clearly estimates man by his capacities for eternity as well as his earthly reputation, by the race to be run in heaven as well as by the fading crowns of earth.

This great fact and apparent paradox is a divine arrangement, not an unfortunate accident. It is not that in this respect the wise and prudent man has perversely wrested his wisdom and prudence to wrong objects, but that the wisdom that is from above is

of an altogether different kind. The untoward paradox is a divine thing; does not so much spring out of the corruption of man, as out of the purpose of the Lord of heaven and earth. It is "He who hides," "He who reveals." The responsibility is thrown upon God, and is not to be borne by man. It is a grand relief from the midst of our mysteries and obscurities to be able to cry unto God, "Thou hast done it." The Judge of the whole earth must do rightly. Verily, I have more right to ask Him why He at first set fast the mountains, or removed them out of their place, or why He made me thus, than to question the rightfulness of the honour which He has put upon the heart, as distinguished from the intellect of man. Whatever clearly springs out of His will, out of His arrangement, out of conditions which He has made to be introductory to the divinest love, must be good. He is not God to us unless it be so. His universal government must be the most perfect, wise, and sublime arrangement. If we can say 'The Lord hath done it,' then we know it must be good, it must be holy. If God hides, it must be His glory to do so. If He reveals, it is only His glorious face that can be seen. There is not more conformity between the eye and light, between the ear and sound, than between the childlike soul and God's revelation of heavenly things. "The fear of the Lord"—not the scientific alphabet, nor the laws of thought—"is the beginning of wisdom." He has chosen how He will speak, and has determined in

royal independence, through what organs, by what powers, to what condition of mind He will reveal Himself; and this is the result—"Thou, O Lord," says the great revelation of His perfections, "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and Thou hast revealed them unto babes."

(2) The Saviour acquiesces in this arrangement, not simply as an act of universal sovereignty, but as most merciful and good; as the Father's good pleasure. Just as He had said on a different occasion, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom:" now He exclaims, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." It was not merely that this was a just decree, one sufficiently proved to be so in the will of the universal Lord, but that it was a good and fatherly thing towards all the brethren of Jesus.

If anything overpowers or confounds us, it is well to know that He is God, and to sit still, waiting for the Lord; but it is a greater thing by far to learn that the will of God is the Father's good pleasure, and to cry, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." The lesson is here taught us that Christ saw, not merely irrevocable fate, but a wise and fatherly mercy in the whole of the arrangement by which these things were "revealed unto babes, and hidden from the wise and prudent."

The general nature and subject-matter of the revelation is thus hinted to us. It is suggested that the great theme of revelation is the heart of the Father.

If it had been God's purpose to make known the ends and purposes of science, to reveal what men can find out for themselves of their wisdom and prudence, or to anticipate the conclusions of science, then it could not have been the justice of the Universal Ruler, nor the love of the Divine Father, to hide it from those who with all their efforts have in every age of the world been seeking it. He has put into the hearts of some men desires to find out the meaning of Nature, to learn the harmony and unity of the Universe, and He is ever revealing this to the wise and prudent. But the speciality of His revelation, the peculiarity of His grace, is this, that it responds not to the yearning of the intellect, but to the great need of the heart. Those things of which God's revelation speaks are not addressed to the man of science in his laboratory, nor to the philosopher in his deep reverie; but to the orphan, crying out for his Father; to the starving souls who hunger for the bread of life; to the blind who say, "Lord, that we may receive our sight;" to the meek and the mourner; to the babe and the prodigal son; to the broken heart; to the contrite spirit. It is even so, for so it seemed good in the Father's sight. But if so, then the principle here expounded is itself a revelation of the Father's heart.

Jesus does not leave us in any doubt whether this was His meaning, for in the next verse he says, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him." He had come

forth to declare the Father. The revelation of Christ was intended to bring out this great conclusion, to disabuse the hearts of men of their fears, to expose their errors, and encourage their unhesitating trust. There is no knowing the Father except through the Son. These things could only enter into hearts that could feel that He was the revelation of the Father, and that in seeing Him they saw the Father. The "wise and prudent" find a hundred difficulties in this, but the "babe in Christ," the child-like heart crying out after Christ, sees it, feels it, and adores! "Even so, Father, for so it has seemed good in Thy sight."

(3) Christ does more than throw the responsibility on God, and acquiesce in it as the Father's good pleasure: He deliberately thanks God that it is so. It is not merely a profound mystery of God's providence and unsearchable purpose, made palatable by the thought of its being in some incomprehensible way well-pleasing to the Father, but it is a matter for deep gratitude and open, audible praise. Jesus does not deprecate the plan of this Fatherly mercy as beyond His comprehension, He does not pray God to reverse His purpose, to confer His revelation upon the wise and prudent, but He rejoices in spirit over it. He exults against His own depression. He rises high, and He becomes one with God in His lofty thanksgiving. We, too, may begin by doing as the old prophets did; we may say, "Be still, and know that He is God;" we may have faith that the Judge of

the whole earth will do rightly; we may go on to believe that our bitter trials, and sore anxieties, and the dark mysteries of God's providence are more than world-wide purposes, are, indeed the throbbings of a Father's heart. We may pray for conformity with these purposes, but the highest step of all, is when we rise into holy thankfulness at the triumph of God's will over us, when we can praise, and feel complacency in the purposes of God. Our Saviour rejoiced in spirit, and thanked God for this arrangement, because He felt the amplitude of its provision. Instead of its being narrow or restricted in its range, the principle of discrimination was the widest and noblest that can be conceived. Were it confined to those whose mental qualifications give them power to test all its evidence, to review all its arguments; if it were revealed to the wise and prudent and hidden from the babes, it must have left the overwhelming majority of those who heard it, destitute of the power and disposition to accept it. If it could only be expressed in learned phraseology, or demanded preliminary knowledge and education, or required long training, what possible hope could there be for the generation that is passing away? But it is made known to the babe; it is its own preliminary; it carries with it its own introduction. The tenderness of the Saviour's love, the grace of the Father's heart, the powers and possibilities of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, come with clearness and force to the little child, as well as to the profound

philosopher. The philosopher, the "wise and prudent" man may know a good deal more of the language and bearing of certain statements, but as to the foundation-work of holy spiritual life, he knows no more than, and hardly feels differently from, the little child. The wise and prudent man will clear away prejudices and explain away difficulties, but he will know no more than the child does, of the central Light, and Power, and Love. Now the babe may never become one of the wise and prudent, and therefore if the alternative were true, the babe, by the quality of his mind, would be effectually shut out of the advantages of this revelation; but it is the great work of the Holy Spirit to renew all classes of mind and teach them as little children to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The babes may never become wise and prudent and learned, but the greatest mind may and can humble itself, and become as a little child. Hence, this is the noblest and broadest offer of mercy. If God's revelation of Himself is to reach the heart of man, it is to reach it by this condition, and the Saviour acquiescing in it as the will and good pleasure of the Father, thanks God for the breadth and splendour of the provision thus made for us.

The Lord Jesus Christ praised God further for the mode in which this arrangement satisfies the yearnings of His own heart, for He proceeds to cry to the weary and toiling, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It was His consciousness of power to reveal the Father that made Him say to the mind exhausted in its search after truth, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest; the rest of satisfaction; the peace of victory; repose after your long and studious cares. I will appease your desires in a way that you never conceived possible. You have been interrogating Nature, but I am more than Nature, and can not only reply to your deepest questionings about it, but give you broader, higher, fuller answers. You labour and are heavily laden with the burdens that you bear, you feel that every response which every portion of the universe gives to your painful inquiry suggests more than it actually supplies. Come unto Me, and I will give you rest. I bring close to your heart that after which all your perturbed inquiries and anxious forebodings only guessed—I make known to you the Father.' Christ felt that He had power to soothe the heart plagued with its own sinfulness. He could take the sin of the world away. He could give rest by cutting out the cancer of sin; by inspiring a divine hatred of sin, and an engrossing love to the Fountain of all goodness.

To man,—hampered by circumstances, overborne by temptation, distracted by foul and evil memories, who cannot be soothed by the wisdom of the world, but may be hardened by doubts and confused by prejudice and tradition,—He cries, 'Come unto Me,

and I will give you rest; relinquish your will to My guidance; yield your awful, precious, wonderful soul to My grace; be subdued by My gentleness; be saved by My power, and you shall find eternal rest.³

SERMON V.

HOPE IN THE LORD.

PSALM CXXXI.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty : neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever.

HUMILITY is the root of hope. Hope is the blossom of meekness. The sorrows of a broken heart, the self-restraint of a meek and quiet spirit, the posture and temper of a little child ; these are the forerunners and the sources of a lively hope. It is always advantageous to discover and understand a law of the Spirit of Life, in Christ Jesus. The law which links humility with hope is such a law. As these graces of the true child develop themselves in the heart of a man, he cherishes the divine, the sublime conviction, that it is God the Spirit who is working within him, "both to will and to do." It is not the common nor the worldly way of looking at these characteristics of Christian life, but it is none the less likely

to be true for all that. In the endeavour to prove this point,—

I. My first remark is, that a large portion of experimental religion, and of the divine life within a man, may be considered under the form of hope. Religious experience is a strong and well-grounded expectation that the promises which God has made to us will not be broken. Such expectation will triumph over the delusion of our senses, over the bitter accusations of our consciences, and the apparently stern decrees of God's providence. "We are saved by hope." "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our God unto eternal life." "The full assurance of hope unto the end" is the highest type of spiritual experience; Christ condescends to call Himself "our hope." We are "the house," that is, the dwelling-place, the family of God, "if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." We look for "that blessed hope, the glorious appearing" or, presence "of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Our heavenly Father leads us on from one step to another of our earthly life by the power of hope. He filled our youthful heart with hopes which beguiled the tedium of our way. He encouraged us to expect in manhood and maturer life higher and nobler joys. Sometimes these hopes were ill-regulated and even delusive, but they taught us true and blessed lessons. They were not realized as we fondly desired, but they were a heavenly discipline,

and we have secured more than they ever fore-shadowed to us in the deep experience they gave us, in the self-conquest that we achieved under their inspiration, in the work they enabled us to do.

In our maturer life we hope still, we have our day-dreams yet : wiser than those of our infancy they are, but scarcely less vivid. Our knowledge of life has taught us to moderate our expectations and restrain our desires, but still we live to a large extent in the future even of this earthly life, and we are cheered amid our difficulties by the sight of our distant home, and nerved for our conflict with evil by the power that our Father has given us of hoping for nobler things. These remarks are peculiarly true in reference to the Divine Life. The feeblest Christian says, "I would not give up my hope for all the world. I hope to be saved." The bravest and noblest of Christ's servants, when he had been pondering and expounding all the mysteries of salvation, exclaimed to his fellow disciples, "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." This hope is the link which connects our faith and love together, and throughout the period of our discipline and trial "hope abideth."

A young Christian begins by hoping for salvation, and the earnest worker hopes for his reward. God's

servant bears His precious seed and casts it into the furrows, but he could not do so without the hope that he should "come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." All the strongest intuitions of faith are of the nature of hope. We are "prisoners of hope" so long as we are pent up in this "durance vile" of flesh and death. The essence of faith is to "turn to the stronghold," and look for the changeless life beyond the reach of our present turmoil, temptations, and disappointment. Verily, we Christians "look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." So long as we live on the earth it is ours to cherish "the hope of salvation," "to endure to the end," "not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel." Many persons refuse the consolation of the gospel, and put it from them with "haughty suicidal hand," because they cannot persuade themselves that the hope does in a measure contain all that it is possible to compass here now. They forget that it is "to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory," that God gives "honour, immortality, and eternal life." They forget that this eternal life is a hope, a divine, abounding, purifying hope, which holds all heaven in its arms.

The same principle holds good to the last; for when we draw near the end of this earthly pilgrimage, when our feet touch the dark waters, and the world recedes from our gaze, when the friends who surround our dying bed seem further and further

removed from us, when all earthly joys fade, and flesh and heart shall fail, the last thing of which we shall be conscious will be our undying hope. When we take the last plunge into the seeming darkness, nothing will cheer our spirit but the hope of that darkness bursting into the light of more than day. The first moment of heaven, too, will be a grand majestic hope that will bear us on into the dateless circle of eternity—"a hope full of immortality." It is my belief, that with all the purified and ennobled capacities of heaven itself, we shall still have much to hope for; we shall never attain the full maturity of our powers, nor ever apprehend all the mysteries of God.

There is nothing more truly sublime than the hope of the old Hebrews. It was the salt which preserved them from corruption. It was the "substance" that was in the sacred tree, "even when it had cast its leaves." The strong conviction that in them all the nations of the world should be blessed; the imperishable hope that the daughter of Judah, though captive and dishonoured, was pregnant still with the world's destiny; the persuasion that God's promises could not be broken; that He would arise and have mercy upon Zion; that He would not cast off for ever; that the stock of David might be blasted and cut down even to its roots, yet that the branch of the Lord should be glorious; and the quenchless hope that on the lowly and despised throne of Judah a King should sit, whose goings forth were of old

and from everlasting, that constituted the life of the holy seed. This wonderful hope was the eternal fire on those mysterious altars, and it is this which gives such unique interest to that peculiar people. Other nations lived upon the past, they upon the future. The great thinkers of other lands rested upon dogmas, they leaned upon promises. The patriarch whose bosom was the synonym of their paradise, "against hope believed in hope;" and it is this hope of theirs which makes much of their religious experience to be the counterpart of ours. It is the hope of Israel which enables us to take up the harp of David now, and find its strings vibrating with divinest melodies.

II. There are certain characteristics of hope expressed in this Psalm, which we can at once transfer to our own experience.

(1) It is a divine hope, "hope in the Lord;" "hope thou in God;" "truly my soul waiteth upon God." The confidence of Israel in their own destiny and deliverance, sprang not from their strange history, not from their own mental power, not from their value in their own esteem, not from their deserts, but from the Lord Jehovah. The root of their being was the eternal, ever-living, holy, faithful, covenant-keeping God. He could not be untrue, and He had promised. This was "the rock of their strength and their refuge." It is just in proportion as our hope fastens on God's promise that it is strong and life-giving. If we substitute anything,

however good, for Him ; if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, we cannot hope safely. It is the hope in *Him* that purifies us, even as He is pure. It is just as we allow His eternal Word to be our stay ; His perfect righteousness to be our acceptance and the completion of our being ; His wisdom to be our guide, however difficult it may seem ; His promise to cheer us, however adverse our circumstances ; His love to be our solace, however terrible the denunciations of our conscience ; His presence to be our joy, though heart and flesh may fail, that our hope is steadfast. As soon as we trust in ourselves, in our circumstances, in our powers, in our own experience, even in our faith or love, then our hope quivers and threatens to go out in darkness. If when we are contemplating either the fulfilment of the destiny of our humanity or the finishing of the mystery of God, we put our trust in one another, in our organization, in our wealth, in our successes, in our numbers, in the power of our preachers, in the progress of our civilization, in the admirable results of our past labours, instead of putting it in the Jehovah Christ, we shall be at once exposed to vicissitude and heartlessness and despair.

(2) It is a diffusive hope. The hope of the old Psalmist was strong enough to quicken the hope of all around him : he sang, " Let Israel hope in the Lord." A true hope has the power of infusing itself into the heart of others. Enter a chamber of sickness ; the symptoms have been exaggerated by sym-

pathizing friends, the sufferer says that he is dying. It seems as though the last wrench of separation must soon be undergone. The shadows of death, the pains of hell, have gotten hold of him, and there is no hope. One or two may cherish some expectation of the sufferer's recovery, but it is not based on any deep reasons, and *they* are unable to break the spell. But a physician, wise and strong and kind, enters, and after a few inquiries, when he is asked whether the beloved friend can recover, says, firmly and clearly, "I hope that he will." Then in a moment the dark spell is gone. The hope that is not ashamed has shone like a sunbeam into that troubled house, and diffused itself on every side.

A Christian's hope should be so thorough and earnest, and rational and life-giving, that he should be able to say by his very look, 'I hope in the Lord, why should not you?' and should thus move like incarnate sunshine through this dark world, the messenger of peace to broken spirits, the conqueror of death to the death-doomed, the minister of joy and gladness. When we think of the poor and down-trodden, the diseased and broken-hearted men, in whose melancholy homes no word of tender love and hope has ever been spoken; when we remember the miserable un-Christ-like faces and tempers that Christian people often shew; the ungenial hopeless lament which is the common language of those who call themselves Christians; the tempestuous hail of scathing words which they use to denounce their brethren;

the godless complaints made about God's providence ; the frightful forgetfulness of His promises, that is treated as venial, and even looked upon as a sign of special holiness, we do long that a company of Christ's disciples should begin to move through the world with a new word on their lips, and with the blessed diffusive power of a mighty hope emanating from them, to bid their brethren "hope in the Lord." Believe me, my brethren, just as your own hope is strong and divine, you will scatter and diffuse it on every side ; you will be the ardent proclaimers of the gospel of hope ; your very life will say to all around you, "Let Israel hope in the Lord."

(3) It is a practical hope. This characteristic is to be gathered out of the words "from henceforth." It is a hope that should take its start from the actual circumstances in which we are placed. The most remarkable fact about the hope of Israel was this, that it did not give way when it became the laughing-stock of the world ; and these spirit-stirring words were in fact uttered again and again by the heroes of the old Covenant amid the deserted sepulchres of their fathers and the ruin of their temple, by the rivers of Babylon and in many a dire captivity. The ground of their hope was in the character of God, not in the fortunes of war ; in the promises of Jehovah, not in the circumstances of earth.

Now a hope proves its divine character and source by rising up under the heel of the oppressor, by defying the crushing power of circumstances and the

temptations of the devil, and by saying, 'Whatever may happen from henceforth hope in the Lord.'

This too is the essence of your evangelic hope, that you may begin to-day, at this very moment, to cherish it. There are many of my hearers who have never done anything but fear. You fear that God will break His promise; that you will never remain true to Him; that you may become inconsistent, or faithless; that you are not children of God. Some of you have been all your lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. Some of you exclaim, 'I have left a house of mourning to come into the sanctuary. I must go back to sorrow and care. How is it possible for me to begin at once to hope in God? Must I not wait till the cloud is overblown? Must I not postpone my hope till the sunbeams fall again upon my path?' Believe me, my brother, if you are resting in the Lord, *that* is sunshine. He is right, and wise, and good. There is no credit, no value in a hope which waits for sunshine. We have the power in God's promises wherewith to make sunshine; or at least, to see that which He does spread over us. "Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth." With strange inconsistency, some of you often postpone your hope till the hour of sickness and death shall come; there are some of you fancying that it will be given to you then, to do what you cannot accomplish in the midst of the burdens and the business of life! You are half disposed to reject the help that is within your reach now, and to wait for some

supernatural quickening when the greatest need shall come. Surely the safest way to secure the consolation of a divine hope in the hour of anguish and parting, is to cherish it always. We stand in perpetual need of it, and it is always possible. The immediateness of all our duties, and the instancy of all God's demands, cannot be too frequently pondered. Let not Christians forget that the words "Now is the accepted time" are addressed to them with as much earnestness as to others. What do we know about to-morrow? Let us "hope in the Lord" to-day. Some one exclaims, 'May I not wait until I have received some clearer evidence of the love of God? May I not wait until this mystery of His providence shall be solved? May I not wait until I see whether the promises of God are more decidedly vindicated?' No! take the hint of my text, and in the hour of your deepest depression "Hope in the Lord from henceforth."

(4) But once more, the true hope is an eternal hope. "From henceforth, even for ever," is the watchword of our Psalm. Our hope should and must take the long "for ever" in. It has to do with unchanging realities, with an everlasting salvation; it looks forward to unseen things; it anticipates the ultimate fulfilment and accomplishment of all things that have been spoken by holy prophets since the world began. Without this element of our hope, this hold upon infinity, which is given us in the gospel, we might easily be discouraged. How else can we endure

bereavement, disappointment, and the blighting of our most cherished wishes? How else can we utter the sad words of farewell to those who are dear to us? How else can we hush the pleadings of our own heart? It is the heaven that we can bring down to earth and begin below, the eternal life which we can now understand, the "for ever" that we may and can now call our own, which distinguishes the Christian's hope above all others. "For ever" is an unfathomable word; but it is well to ponder it, and search its meaning, and fill it by our hope with holiness, and love, and God. The reasons of this hope of ours being eternal are seen in the very necessities of our being. We feel, we know, that we can never die; and unless our whole existence rests thus on the love and promise of God, it is useless to entrust a portion of our being to Him. The longest time that could be mentioned is an insignificant atom of eternity. Unless we can cherish a hope which entrusts the whole of our being to the eternal promise of God we are holding back our heart from Him. The groundwork of our hope is, the perfect righteousness that He gives to us; the entire absolution for our sins which He calls upon us to accept; the work of the eternal Spirit within us, which He warns us most earnestly not to quench or resist: it is, further, the assurance that He is working out an eternal plan in us, that He has begun a divine discipline and education within us, which will not be completed until the day of Jesus Christ. He who grasps the great

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hope of the gospel must diffuse around him and encourage others to cherish thoughts of heaven and feelings of heaven, and even to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

Let there come what will to us in this world of sin and sorrow, we will hope to become like Him who has taken our flesh that He might raise us to His spirit. However great our disappointments, let us hold this hope fast; so that no man take our crown away. However long the purposes of God may slumber, or the hope of the world be delayed, let us hope in Him, knowing that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. If He tarry, wait for Him; for He will come, and will not tarry. He will avenge us speedily, however long we wait. All things herald His triumph; the mysteries of to-day are the transparencies of to-morrow; the clouds of earth are always dissolving in the sunshine of heaven. However tedious the straight path may seem, let us hope; ever knowing that it must lead to life. However we may be scattered over the wide world, let us hope in Him who is our dwelling-place, our refuge, and our portion. Wherever in the universe the hand of the Lord may carry us, through whatever worlds and duties He may lead us, let us hope in Him. We can go no whither where He is not. Millenniums will only bring us nearer to Him who has loved us with an everlasting love. Wherever we lay us down to die, it shall be no death to us; we shall still say, "Hope in the Lord, for I shall yet praise Him;" and shall

diffuse about our death-bed and corpse the undying faith, the eternal hope, which God, who cannot lie, has given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

It is not my intention to pursue the deep reasons for our hope, but simply to call your attention to the help which this bright rhapsody of early hope gives us in the cultivation of Christian graces. 'How,' say some of you, 'can we cherish this high feeling? The common-places of our Christian knowledge cannot work all these wonders with us. Have you nothing better to do, than to hold up an impossible ideal that we have often striven to realize, and as often failed to make our own?' It is almost needless to say that a firm belief in the promises of God, in the character and work of Christ; a thorough reception of the Crucified One into your troubled spirit, a willing surrender to the Spirit of God as He works with you and is ever leading you to repentance, and faith, and holiness, must be equivalent to the hope of the gospel. All this the dullest mind can perceive, but the difficulty often suggests itself to us preachers, and to those of you who are striving to be Christians, that all this divine life, of faith, hope, and love, resembles a charmed circle of emotions which can produce one another, but which no mere common human feeling can possibly lead us to appreciate. If by some inexplicable process we could be conscious of one genuine Christian thought and feeling, the entrance would be made into the almost

mystic circle. But how are we to break into it? where are we to begin? With hope? with faith? with repentance? with prayer? All are equally perplexing; all seem equally necessary and equally precious, and in some senses equally impossible. It is as difficult to believe as to hope; to come to Christ as to repent of sin. How are we to rush in? how are we to take the kingdom of heaven by force? One doctrine is as easy as another; one emotion as much within our reach, as much above our apprehension, as another. I would not underrate the practical difficulty, but these words, though they convey no new truth, may help you to solve it. They set forcibly before us the emotions which are totally inconsistent with true, divine, diffusive, and eternal hope; and which, notwithstanding, are commonly supposed to be peculiarly favourable to it.

I begin with that which the Psalmist disclaims, but which the merely worldly man makes the basis of his hope.

(1) "The stout heart."—The bravery and daring of the strong man who has conquered difficulties before and means to do so again; the pride of heart which characterizes the man who is abundantly conscious of strength and entirely complacent, who has the most satisfied sense of his own importance, who is haughty and wise in his own conceit, may induce in him a spurious hope, but it is altogether adverse to the spirit of the gospel, and the hope of the Christian. If you find one unspiritual man cheering

and comforting another, trying to help him to face the inevitable decree, you will often hear such language as this;—it may seem cold and withering enough, but it is the horrible opiate taken by many a conscience:—Hark! he whispers to his brother—‘You need have no fear, you have been always a moral man, and have thought a good deal about religion, and been kind, and charitable, and good-natured. What a kind friend! what a fine fellow! You have paid your debts, and made your will. Be of good cheer; it will be all well.’ I have known many men stupefied by such talk, but as long as there was any power of response the cry has always returned, ‘I cannot find any consolation here; all this would be to hope in myself, to find my source of happiness, the stay of my life in this exhausted diseased heart of mine. If that is all there is to help me, I must die unhelped: I have drained my poor heart out, there is nothing left there. Tell me of something better than myself, of a perfect sacrifice, a spotless righteousness, a well of salvation, a free promise.’ But, my brethren, before a man can say that, he must have relinquished his own self-trust; for there is no hope exercised in the Lord as long as we have the faintest notion of braving it out in our own strength, of choosing our own terms of salvation, of deserving or earning anything at the Father’s hands. It is the “poor in spirit,” not the haughty, who possess the kingdom of heaven; it is “the mourners” who are “comforted” with a divine con-

solation; it is "the meek," those who bow down to receive the mercy and the righteousness, who are truly happy; therefore it is those whose "hearts are not haughty" who may confidently say, "Let Israel hope in the Lord."

A hope which is grounded and rooted in God's love and truth is disgusted with self, denies self, loses self in God. Like Saul on the way to Damascus, he who is inspired with Christian hope exclaims, "I have no will now but Thine;" "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and after years of divinely directed service, he exultingly cries, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given;" "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

(2) Another barrier in the way of Christian hope is "the high look," which, as the Wise Man said, "is an abomination to the Lord." The Psalmist sang, "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; let Israel hope in the Lord." So when our Lord wished to draw the strongest contrast between ceremonialism and true piety, between affectation and earnestness, between the cursed hypocrite and the accepted and justified saint, He gave us the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Self-complacency invariably degenerates into censorious and harsh judgment of others. He who said, "I fast twice in the week," "I thank God that I am not as other men," concludes his harangue with "nor even as this publican." The haughty heart is closely

allied to the lofty look. It would require much illustration and argument to shew how this sense of superiority to others contends with and extinguishes evangelic hope. So long as you are ruminating over your own excellencies, and contrasting them with the inconsistencies of others ; so long as you are meditating your own glory and prudence and propriety, secretly nursing a sense of your own righteousness and honour and desert, to the disparagement of your brother and your sister, so long you will have no full assurance of faith or hope. Let each esteem others better than himself. There is something in our brother whom we are tempted to despise or under-rate, nobler and purer, and more acceptable to God, than anything in ourselves. Let us think of that, and repress with all our power of self-mortification the disposition that rises within us to scorn and to backbite our brother.

Further, the high look is the essence of that bigotry and intolerance which represses all generous hope in the Lord about our brother man, and which has so often turned our blessed Christianity into a curse. We have rejoiced in ourselves and our principles, when we should have been rejoicing in Him who has made us and redeemed us. We cannot hope in God for the world until we have renounced the selfishness and pride which make our own ideas and excellencies the standard by which we judge of all men.

(3) We find in this Psalm another hint towards

the cultivation of hopefulness. It is in the exclusion of the "great matter," and the "high thing."

How many there are who fan their Christian hope by "seeking for some great thing to do, some secret thing to know;" who presume that Christian hope must spring out of some enterprise of vast extent, some problem which a higher wisdom can solve; who fancy that the high hope of the Christian is reserved for the heroes of great undertakings and deep philosophy; for the men who are identified with the widest purposes and appliances of God's kingdom, or occupied with a constant search into the deep things of God!

Now the fact of the case is, that nothing more effectually damps our peace of mind than the exaggeration of our possibilities, the imagination of what is to be done by our feeble powers, the distension of our hopes by means like these, the consequent stretching of those powers beyond their appropriate functions, and then the collapse of all our prospects in disappointment and regret. How much of the vain hope of men has been due to their vainer speculation, their eager desire to be wise above what God has revealed to them, their wild effort to do what they never could accomplish! There are some of you, my brethren, who imagine that before you can "hope in the Lord" you must solve all the difficulties of revelation, that you must reduce to your own forms of thought, to your own modes of judgment, the mysteries of God; that you must compre-

hend the absolute and the ~~infinite~~, as well as recognize their existence; ~~that~~ you must understand the union ~~between~~ the divine and human; the origin ~~and~~ explanation of evil; the beginning and ending of the universe; the nature of the future life; the way in which the destinies of men are to be harmonized with the justice of God and the grace of the Eternal Judge: but, brothers, these things are too high for any of us;—what can we know? too deep for any of us;—what can we do? It were far more appropriate that we should rather discover the limits of our powers and the directions in which we cannot travel, the topics where it is rash to speculate and vain to pry, and that before we attempt to fathom the abyss of light we should aim to “walk in the light” that shines around us, and have fellowship one with another. The whole compass of religious experience is a closed circle to us so long as we attempt to measure it, to turn it into a philosophy, to analyze all its mysteries, to understand all its strange and wondrous changes. If we exercise ourselves in things too high for us, we shall never say by our life, or sacrifice, or by our own ardent hope, “Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.” Verily, if you exercise yourself to understand how God is one, and how God and man are one in Jesus Christ; if you begin to explain the Infinite, and measure the Infinite justice and mercy, or to discourse learnedly on how and why evil has entered the dominion of a holy God, or to explain the

how and the wherefore of all His providence, you may "darken counsel by words without knowledge," but you will not "hope in the Lord." I see a great multitude bearing heavy burdens; groaning and labouring under terrible self-imposed toil; they would climb the ~~mount~~ of God, but it is hard work and fruitless effort with ~~such a task as they have set~~ themselves. They are trying to carry the water of life to the summit of the throne, from which the river of its fulness is ever flowing. There are others like the child whom Augustine saw carrying a shell full of water to a hole in the sand, and who said to him, "I am going to put all the ocean into my little well." They are trying in impossible ways to do impossible things, "exercising themselves in great matters and in things too high for them." How many poor sinners are striving to expiate their own sins, to wash away the stain of their own transgressions! How many Christians are aiming at converting the world by their own strength and efforts, instead of quietly exulting in the fact that the Lord has laid their sins upon His own Eternal Lamb, that He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers! Alas! they are putting forth exhausting efforts to discover what is undiscoverable, to know what is unknowable, to do what is already done!

(4) Lastly, we find that far back in the Old Testament times these men of prayer and faith and hope had caught sight of the deepest secret of all. They had learned that great lesson which Jesus came into

the world to teach—"Except ye are converted, and become as little children, ye can in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It was a hard task for this great minstrel and teacher to come to such a conclusion; to relinquish perhaps some favourite project, some temple-building idea, some warfare against God's enemies, some hasty realization of God's promises and prophecies. But he "behaved and quieted" himself; he schooled himself with strong effort. He found it arduous work to hush his feverish ambition, to repress his self-righteous glorification, to wean himself from the enterprise on which he had set his heart, to come "like a weaned child," weak and helpless, to his Father-God, and say, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Here is the positive side of the picture. It is not idleness and indifference, it is not self-government and docility of which he was speaking. It was the Spirit of Christ that was in him that thus spake. In the great truth of these beautiful words we are led into the family of Bethany, and to the love of Jesus; and we hear Him saying to His disciples, in words which made many a mother's heart to burst with joy, and loosed the bonds of many a burdened spirit, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The spirit of the child is not the mere absence of haughtiness, and pride, and ambition; it is not a mere negation of distended and dissatisfied

hopes, and overbearing and intolerant judgments; it is the actual presence of simplicity and teachableness, of modesty and humility. It is not the forest dell, the deep valley of thought hidden from all vain and flattering eyes and words, but it is the lily which blossoms there. It is not "the devil's darling sin," "the pride that apes humility," but it is the truly humble mind, the patient spirit full of quiet hope. It is not the sullen relinquishment of the difficult undertaking that was to cover the man with honour, but the earnest discharge of the common daily task, the unseen, unnoticed act of loving obedience and self-sacrifice. It is the "putting away of all malice, all hypocrisies, all evil speaking," in order to "receive with meekness the engrafted word," "the pure milk of the word, that they might grow thereby." Surely when this quiet waiting upon God comes over us, when we make His will our rule, His word our guide, the "hope that maketh not ashamed" is ours, because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

Other hopes will shame us. We may hope to be rich, to be honoured, to be distinguished, to be flattered by the world, to be surrounded with luxuries, to follow the bent of our own will; but whether such hopes are realized or not, they will make us ashamed. If we fail to secure them, we have wasted our life by hoping for them; and if we succeed in our quest, we find they do not give what we had hoped from

them, and they come for the most part when we cannot enjoy them.

This hope in the Lord, the hope of eternal life, the hope of God's favour, can never disappoint us; for it holds its own fruition in it, it begins its heaven below, it satisfies while it quickens our desire. He that drinketh of the waters of earthly pleasure shall thirst again, but whoso drinketh of the water that Christ will give him, shall never thirst; and it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

SERMON VI.

DELIGHT IN THE LORD.

PSALM XXXVII. 4.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord ; and He shall give thee the desires
of thine heart.*

NOTHING more calamitous for the world can be conceived than that God should give to all men the desires of their hearts ; that human wishes should thus become the measure of Divine mercies ; that Divine goodness should be arrested by human desires ; that the deep designs and far-reaching intentions of the Most High should be interfered with or overthrown by the rebellion, the prayers, or the desires of men.

The wisest man is too ignorant to suggest, the strongest man too feeble to aid, the holiest man too selfish, impure, and carnal to understand the counsels of the Almighty. " He is of one mind ; who shall turn Him ? He giveth not account of any of His matters." Our explanations of God's laws, the considerations upon which we ground our wishes, are so trivial, that the moment when even the wisest and the best of

men should take the government of the world under their control, would be one fraught with infinite disaster to the welfare and harmony of the universe.

Our destiny is so closely blended with that of others, our happiness or anxiety, our success or failure, our work and prospects are so intimately connected with those of others, that our wishes could not—in all probability—be realized without changing the whole moral, spiritual, and physical condition of the world. God's great laws could not be modified to our desires without deranging the harmony of the universe. Thus, for example, the ignorance of a traveller might desire the quenching of a volcano, or the arrest of some torrent of lava; but the fulfilment of such a desire might cause a terrible earthquake in some crowded city, and substitute the misery of thousands for the inconvenience and alarm of one individual. The stormy wind hushed here, might breed and then dispense the dire breath of pestilence on every side; the hurricane silenced on some waters might lock all the springs of commerce on another scene; and even the war and bloodshed which the strivings of philanthropic desire would righteously avert, may in God's grace bring untold blessings on successive generations. But mere ignorance of the mysterious and inscrutable reasons which guide the Divine government would be the least of the evils at work, for human desires are so deplorably selfish in their operation, that the moment of their gratification would be that which should give the signal

of grievous inequality in the lot of men, and the outbreak of most fearful passion. In the indiscriminate gratification of human desire, it would be found that vice would triumph over virtue, that lust would trample love beneath its hoofs, that ambition would get the better of meekness, that despotism would crush liberty, and that all evil would triumph over all good. If God were to permit for one short hour that all human desires should be satisfied, it is impossible to calculate the dire confusion and pitiless despair that would prevail. Ignorance would unsettle every natural law; selfishness would break down every barrier; oppression, lust, and rapine would leap forth with fell fury. It is true, that prisons, hospitals, and workhouses might disgorge their occupants, poverty might leap into affluence, and diseases and devils be cast out of suffering humanity. The slave might snap his fetters, and many an oppressed sufferer might rush forth to freedom and to life; but amid the wide-spread despair excited by the greatest curse that had ever fallen on humanity, methinks the prayer would ascend, "O God, take back our liberty; bind us once more by Thy laws; Thou, and Thou alone, knowest what is best for us. Fence us round with Thine ordinances; restore to us Thy government; let us know once more that Thou alone canst speak, and it be done; Thou alone command so that it shall stand fast!"

Let us ask ourselves, What would have been the consequence if, before we had learned to send up

those desires in the heaven-taught prayer, "Thy will be done," God had granted to us all our desires? who is there among us who will not confess, that there have been times in his history when his desires could not have been satisfied without an alteration in the entire moral condition, or physical laws of the universe? And all this, in order that he might escape some anticipated evil, which after all never befel him. Is there none who will admit that he would, if possible, have avoided the predestined consequences of many great acts of imprudence, the legitimate punishment which his own folly or recklessness brought on him; and would thus have become an exception to those general rules of equity by which God governs the world? How few are there of us who have not prayed to be delivered from the pain or suffering which in the good Providence of God have proved our true salvation and greatest blessing! How often would we have snatched some precious treasure even from the right hand of God, and said, "O God, we know better far than Thou dost, how to shield it from harm, to keep it from sin, to meeten it for Thy paradise." Is there no one who will admit that his highest desire has often been that his progress in business, or study, or literary enterprise, or Christian work, should succeed, and not fail; or that certain carefully-devised and long-nurtured plans of his wisdom should answer, although he now sees that success would have been his curse and not his blessing? If God had granted him these desires, he would

never have received the spiritual refreshment which accompanied bitter worldly disappointments. If he had not been cast down, he would never have known the infinite mercy of not being destroyed. If he had not been in perplexity, he could never have estimated the brilliance of those promises which shone out like stars amid the dark night, and saved him from despair. If he had never battled with doubt, but had seen his title clear to the everlasting inheritance, he would never have grasped with victorious faith, as now he does, the strong words of God. Ah! my brethren, if it were allowed to us to choose for ourselves what we would have, there are perhaps few moments when the most sanguine of us would dare to make the choice. The fables, the philosophy, and the experience of all nations, are crowded with lessons that men are blind, and ignorant, and selfish, and know not what is best for them; that they cannot enumerate their mercies; that the overruling of an Infinite Mind and Will is the only refuge for their ignorance, the only hope of the race. He must be a bold man, or a fool, who would dare to take his lot into his own government, and be the master of his own destiny. The same principle will apply equally well, if we suppose our merely human desires to be made the measure of God's benedictions to us—of the spiritual blessings which are of the greatest necessity for us. Some are longing for more power to work, when probably God sees that they want more patience to endure, more power to feel. Some

are ever yearning after new truth, when God sees that their need is to understand more fully the truth already within their reach. Many are hankering earnestly after the full assurance of faith, when God sees that the faith they possess is very deficient and one-sided; many are praying to be more actively useful, more abundant in labour, when the Lord chooses to visit them with prolonged affliction, to teach them that their strength is to be still, their work to sit down blindfolded and handcuffed, waiting patiently for Him. These remarks may seem to disprove, rather than confirm the teaching of the text. They may discourage the cherishing of any desires at all, or the uttering of them in prayer; for it is clear that God knows better than we, the things we have need of, before we ask Him; and He will fulfil His own counsels, irrespective of our desires. This may seem a natural conclusion, but if we look a little more deeply into the matter we shall find that what has been said concerning our ignorance and selfishness, the poverty of our ideas, the weakness of our understandings, and the sovereignty of God, goes to shew that if the Lord gives to man the desires of his heart, one of two things must occur;—either God's designs, laws, and arrangements must be altered to meet man's desires, or man's desires must be lifted up, and raised into harmony with God's plans and purposes. If God and man are to be at one, either God must come down to man, or man must be lifted up to God. If our prayers are ever heard and an-

swered by the Infinite God, it must either be by God descending to meet our wishes, foolish, one-sided, and sinful as they often are, or by our desires becoming, through Divine influence, such that He is prepared to grant them to His creatures.

We dare not suppose that God's plans and purposes can change at our bidding. In every corner of space, through every moment of dateless duration, He has said, "I AM;" "I change not;" "Of Him, through Him, to Him are all things;" "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But in contrast with these characteristics of the Most High, human desires are the most fickle and shifting of all things; they are based on partial knowledge, on selfish fancies; and it is incredible that God's infinite and perfect designs should be accommodated to these. But is there no paradox in this, that though "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," "The prayer of the upright is His delight?" Is there no delusion in the command, "Ask, and ye shall receive?" or in the assurance of the Apostle, "Ye have not, because ye ask not?" If we still hear these words with delight, it is because we have been forced back on the other mode of explaining this blessed fact; namely, that God hears the prayers which He has Himself prompted, that He hears certain prayers, and grants to certain men the desires of their hearts, because He has inspired those desires. He gives to certain longings of the heart the fullest satisfaction, because He has by His Spirit

suggested those longings. He teaches men to desire the blessing which He is prepared to bestow; to acquiesce in that which He intends to do; to gather all prayers up into, and base all prayers upon this one all-comprehending petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

Do not reply, to such an explanation of the phenomenon of prayer, 'What profit is there in prayer? for the prayer will be fulfilled whether we offer it or not; the thing will be done in us whether we ask for it or not.' No; God's law of bestowment is, "For all this I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." The prayer of faith is the preparation of the heart for the coming blessing; it is the ascent of the soul into the purposes of God—the flowing forth of the free-will of man into the free-will of God—the drawing near of man to God—the thoughts of man becoming the decrees of God, because the decrees of God have become the desires of man. In other words, it is our being made willing in the day of God's power. These desires are none the less our desires because they are thus purified and sanctified; they have all the character of desires. They are perhaps the strongest desires that ever sway the human soul. The cry of the Publican for mercy was the very instrument by which his soul laid hold on everlasting things, by which the inward change was wrought. You mistrust God, you cherish rebellious thoughts of Him if you say in your hearts, 'God's will *must* be done, whether we pray

for it or not;’ for there is a vast difference in the fulfilment of God’s purposes, whether man resists them or submits to them. There will be an infinite difference in the result, whether you are fighting against God or yielding yourself to Him; whether you are contending with, or acquiescing in His purposes of mercy; and whether you desire and pray that His will should be done in you or not. If God’s will is done in opposition to you, it will crush you; if it is done *in* you, *with* you, *by* you, it will save you.

Here then is the double truth; here are the two sides of the great contradiction; God and man are at one with each other. The Eternal Wisdom is pouring itself into the poor human heart; the everlasting God is raising up those that be bowed down. Viewed on the side of God, it is the Divine Mind working out His vast designs; it is the Sun of Righteousness shining forth upon His subject and subordinated worlds in His own imperial Majesty, attracting them to Himself, causing them to revolve in their orbits and on their axes, and illumining them with His own radiance; but, viewed on the side of man, it is prayer, and the answer to prayer; it is desire, and the granting of desire; the petition and the fulfilment. Viewed on the side of God, all is His ordering; as consciously realized in the heart of man, all is free, and the desires of his heart are fulfilled. Moreover, as these desires become spiritual and holy, they rise up under God’s teaching, and enter into

the settled purposes of His will, and through the might of His Spirit, and the working of His Providence, prayers are ever ascending from human hearts to His throne, that He would be pleased to do those things which He has determined before to accomplish. If this view of the difficulty be a true one, it is evident that by no means all the desires which man's folly, pride, or selfishness may offer up to the Lord are those which He condescends to fulfil, but those only which are in harmony with His will, and the existence of which are in themselves proofs of deepening, growing fellowship with Himself.

The question now arises, How are we to know whether the desires of our hearts are divinely implanted, and are such as God will hear? It is a wise inquiry, for we are incompetent judges of what is good for us; and we have many desires which we may think fit to turn into prayers, while God may see that to grant them would be to visit us with the heaviest calamity that could befall us.

The child may cry for a knife, for fire, for food, which it would be cruel to grant. It is better that the child should be unhappy, vexed, angry because its request is denied, than that the gift should be bestowed and instantly abused. When Paul was pierced by the "thorn in the flesh," he thrice besought the Lord to remove it from him; but that desire of Paul's was wrong. God had a greater blessing in store for His servant than the removal of "the thorn," and gave him instead of such

deliverance, the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Does the Holy Scripture, and will the Holy Spirit, help us to solve this great problem, or guide us to the class of desires which will foreshadow the Divine purpose? Have we any magnet that will point out to us the eternal pole of the will of God? Is there any accessible test by which we may estimate the mind and purpose and decree of God, and thus judge of the hopefulness of our own desires?

The text gives us abundant help here; "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart;" or, as it might perhaps be correctly paraphrased, "Delight in the Lord, and then thou mayest trust thy desires; they will be the fore-runners of blessings, the beginning of their own realization." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Delight thyself in the Lord, and thou wilt desire strongly only what is in harmony with His will, and best for thyself. All thy wishes will be brought into subjection to His will, and thou wilt crave only those things which He is ready and anxious to bestow upon thee.

This is precisely the combination of ideas which we find in the 22nd chapter of Job, the 26th and 27th verses; where Eliphaz says,—“Then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy

vows." And the idea pervades like life-blood all the revelations of Scripture on the nature of prayer. We are, however, compelled and induced earnestly to inquire,—What is meant by "delighting in God?" It is one of those comprehensive terms which involve great spiritual life and energy, and it seems to gather into itself all lower forms of religious experience. It is one of those broad sayings which involves every virtue; cuts at the root of every vice; and implies a high tone of spiritual understanding and self-sacrifice. Great victories over sin and self must be gained, much of the life of faith must be lived, before the ever-blessed God becomes the *DELIGHT* of His creature.

Delight in the Lord supposes delight in His character and attributes. It implies that His pure and holy character is the absorbing object of thought, that in the contemplation of it the mind is free from all suspicions, all hard thoughts, and rebellious feelings; that while it dwells on these high themes with reverence and with awe, it also finds in them a source of deep complacency. I fear that in much of our preaching and writing and thinking in the present day, we are apt too often to lose sight of the character of God. We are ready to take it for granted that we have read and thought and learnt enough about His character and His attributes. It was not thus with the Fathers of the Church, it was not thus with our great Anglican and Puritan ancestors, whose folio volumes still witness to their study of the glorious theme: but I fear that many Christians only

think of the holiness, justice, wisdom, goodness, and grace of God, as necessary articles in some dry theological discussion, rather than as mighty facts in which the understanding should find its most active exercise, the heart the noblest objects of its love. May I ask, brethren, what subject of contemplation most interests and absorbs you? What theme most thoroughly engrosses your attention and gives you the most real enjoyment? Is your highest pleasure in the pursuit of art, or the study of science, or the promotion of political progress, or the advancement of some benevolent or philanthropic object? Is your main delight in devotion to worldly business, in amassing a fortune, in acquiring earthly possessions? or must you confess that your delight is in the pleasures of society, the excitements of music, the sensual gratification of your mere animal needs? Do you acknowledge that your delight is in yourself, in your favourite scheme of amusement, or self-education? or dare you say that you have learned to delight yourself in the nature and perfections of the Eternal God? Test yourself by the simple rule,—To what does your mind fly when you have finished your day's work? Is it to your hobby, to your self-indulgence, to some fresh scheme of enterprise, to the book, or the scene, or the pleasure which drives serious thought from the mind that you instinctively turn? Or, on the other hand, is it natural to you to contemplate the ideal of all beauty, the source of all power, the giver of all good, the foundation

of all righteousness, the complex of all causes,—the Eternal, the Holy, the Almighty, the Loving, the Blessed God? Is God Himself your most exceeding joy? Does your soul swell with the sublime conception of His nature and character? If so, the Lord Himself is preparing you to receive the desires of your heart.

Again, delight in the presence of God is involved in the command of my text. By that is meant the consciousness and realization of the Divine nearness and His personal relations with the soul. It is one thing to believe in God's Omnipresence; and another to say, "Surely God is in this place;" and yet another to say, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." No man whose ideas of God's character and government are such as inspire distrust and fear, whose feelings towards God have been fashioned under the harsh systematizations of theologians, or the insufficient teachings of reason, or the terrible whispers of guilty conscience, can feel delight in conscious nearness to the Almighty.

If logic, tradition, philosophy, or guilty conscience have created the concept of the Almighty, it is only at rare intervals that the soul flies to the refuge of the imposing and overwhelming reality. If this be all that you possess, you have never yet learned to delight in God; and it is only in times of grievous calamity that you turn to Him as a last resource, in the dim hope that He may deliver you out of distresses from which you feel unable to extricate

yourself. You will not, you cannot delight in the presence of God until you have been reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ; and no man ever yet was reconciled to Infinite power and righteousness until he was able by some process to project into that righteousness eternal, divine mercy, and transfigure law into love. In other words, no man is reconciled to God until he believes that God is reconciled to him. It is through Christ that you are reconciled to God, because in Christ you see that God is reconciled to you. It is in Christ Jesus, the Son, the Lamb of God, that you have learned to love God with that love which casts out fear, to put your confidence in Him, to believe in His promises, to acquiesce in the way in which He will forgive and save you. When this is the case, you will at once find whole worlds of desire upon the point of satisfaction; "the desires of your heart" will hasten to their realization, for the first cry after God is the beginning of the answer, and the hungering after righteousness is itself blessed.

As soon as you make your delight in God's presence, and in all that ministers this great gift to you, your carnal lusts are subdued, your desires are purified; and the vices, the follies, or the trifles which once filled up the measure of your desires, and engrossed your thoughts, become distasteful and obnoxious to you. Your whims, your fancies, your secret wishes have all shifted their ground; the mean ignoble aim, the selfish lust, the self-seeking

plan can no longer find a place in the soul that delights in God's presence; for this is the beginning of heaven upon earth, and the soul that can cry out in the plenitude of its satisfaction,—“O God! I have *Thee* in the plenitude of Thy grace; I have Thee in the majesty of Thy grace; I have Thee in Christ; I have Thee in the teaching of Thy Spirit”—cannot combine with such high sources of enjoyment petitions for things that are merely of the earth earthy. These can no longer be called the desires of the heart; they may come as blessings from the hand of a loving Father, and be received with joy and gratitude, but they make no matter of prayer. The sigh of the spirit is ever after spiritual blessings; “Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee” is its daily cry, and the realization of this desire is sufficient compensation for sorrow and suffering: it can make up for the absence of personal comfort, for the presence of pain, for the loss of friends, for the withdrawal of all other sources of consolation. It eats out the disposition to repine, it destroys even the strong desire for deliverance from trouble, and teaches the full meaning, the exhaustive nature of the prayer, “Thy will be done.”

Again, Delight in the Lord involves delight in the kingdom of God. We give thanks to our Father that many of those manifestations of His character and presence which inspire delight in the heart of His children, exercise a double influence; they give unspeakable delight in themselves, and

they prepare the way for heavenly benedictions ; they eat out the desires that are evil, and they satisfy those that are divine.

Our desires generally grow out of the revelation to us of ends or objects which we feel will increase our present happiness, or remove our pain ; and they take their character from that which, in a greater or less degree, gives us pleasure. Desire is but the flower of the plant in which we delight ; it is in the flower that the seed is fashioned, nursed, and matured. If we delight in the kingdom of God, then our strongest desires cluster around the progress of that kingdom. Thus they become allied to the purposes of God ; they are occupied with the highest interests of mankind ; they rise out of self, and take the noblest substitute for self ; they assume, as it were, the character of prophecies, and predict in the confidence of faith the fulfilment of God's great promises. The desires of those who delight in God's kingdom are the heralds of great things. These are the yearnings which first predict, and then bring the blessing. But let us not indulge mistaken notions on this subject : God's kingdom is not the little narrow circle in which we happen to move ; nor the branch of the Church which reveals itself through our ordinances, but the great dominion of God in Christ—the reign of God in the earth—the dominion of the glorified Son of God. If we take delight in that, if we are ever longing to see it advance and flourish, to be ourselves its willing and

obedient subjects, to devote ourselves to its progress, then our desires will be given to us, our wishes granted.

If our genuine desire is, not that *we* should have the credit of extending God's kingdom, but that by any and all means the kingdom of our God may increase, and its subjects become more numerous, united, and holy, then our desires will always be given to us. We shall, moreover, have eyes to see the great glory of our Lord where once we could discern nothing of His presence. We shall become aware of His working in regions where once we could only see His enemies. Delighting ourselves in Him, we shall receive the desires of our hearts. We know that the designs of God are along the lines of His universal kingdom, and that He is daily bringing souls into willing homage, into loving surrender. By His Word, by His holy day, by the energies of His Church, by the afflictions of His hand, by disappointments and trials and pain, and by the pleadings of His Spirit He reveals the attractions of His sway, the worthiness of His deep purposes, the infinite beauty of His nature, the awful loveliness of truth, the grand rewards of purity, the blessed peace of submission. If we know anything of the misery that is in the earth, the foul libels on the name of God, the curse that crushes human hearts, the infinite burden laid on the frail spirit of man by his ignorance and corruption and rebellion against the authority of this unknown Royal Father,

then our desires for the world must be an intense longing after the diffusion of the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, after the extension of the kingdom of truth and righteousness and Christ. These desires of ours cannot be so deep as God's desires are for ends like these. Our sympathy with sorrow is not to be compared with that of Jesus; our longing after the glory of God in humanity cannot be equal to the longing which dictates all the deepest purposes of the Almighty. If we delight in Him, He will give us this our heart's desire; for He has given, indited, communicated to us out of His own eternal bosom, the desire itself. May it be realized! May Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven! For Thine, O God, our Father, is the kingdom, and power, and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON VII.

REST IN THE LORD.

PSALM XXXVII. 7.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.

It was more difficult for David to do this, than for us to do it. He had more at stake, and less to help him; he had all the mysteries which beset us, and many more peculiar to his age and to the dispensation under which he lived. That which we look back upon as prophecy since fulfilled, as supernatural anticipation of better days, was, as it passed through his mind, only a hope and an aspiration. For him there was very little light thrown around the darkness of the grave; it was a pit of destruction and forgetfulness, haunted by strange fears. He had no very large experience, nor wise induction from God's providence to fall back upon; he was surrounded by enemies, and often well-nigh crushed by misfortune. He found it harder than we do, to sever temporal disasters from Divine inflictions; and yet he could use this inspiring language, and summon his brothers to rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently

for Him. My most anxious task as a preacher of the gospel has always been to create the uneasiness and distress which could find its only true solace in the everlasting righteousness, power, and love of God—to awaken that distrust of self which can only be soothed by appropriating the grace and promise of God. Fatalism, quietism, and indifference to unseen things are so common, that advice very different from that contained in my text is often imperatively needed. Yet, when we look more deeply into this matter we shall find that the indolence engendered by self-indulgence and worldliness, the indifference and self-confidence from which we seek to awake the slumbering conscience, and the sloth from which the Church has need ever to be aroused, are all opposed to “resting in God,” and “waiting patiently for Him.” There are men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; and there may be men who turn the rest of God into stoicism and sloth: but the licentious man does not understand the first principle of the gospel, nor does the stoic or the sleepy worldling know anything of “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” Moreover, it seems to me that there are now abroad many symptoms of overwrought excitement, of jaded effort, of perilous assumption, of discontented inquiry, of restless searching after the impossible, of an arrogant hurrying of God, which render this gentle remonstrance peculiarly seasonable; and I am sure that there are few Christians who do not

find every day of their lives abundant need for the consolation which the words of my text administer.

There are three senses in which we are accustomed to think of rest, and each of these is destined to take an important part in the development of the Christian life. There is (1) The rest of weariness; (2) The rest of strength; and (3) The rest of victory.

The first, or the rest of weariness, is that which is almost forced on our bodies and our spirits when they are overborne by undue effort. The second is that which we voluntarily take in view of great difficulties, and which does, in fact, accompany all noble exertion. The third is the deep calm which flows out of triumph and conscious success, and which is neither weariness nor strength so much as a new nature.

I. The rest of weariness.—The body rests: it is this rest which “knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,” which is “sore labour’s bath,” “balm of hurt minds,” “great nature’s second course,” “chief nourisher in life’s feast.” All life is submitted to this law. The leafless winter, the hushed songsters of the forest, the infant slumbering on its mother’s breast, the sealed eyes of the shipboy cradled on the surge, and all the “magic of night as she moves from land to land and touches all with her opiate wand,” tell the same story. Work demands rest, and rest is the stimulus of work. The intellect itself must have its quiet places and still retreats, where holy calm, and unconscious growth, and secret renovation, re-

pair the losses that have been sustained in the higher exertions of the soul. The mind must have resting-places and homes of truth, from which to start, to which to return wearied, though it be only with a single olive-branch. Without such shelter after the rude conflict of temptation, the mind of man is in imminent danger of universal doubt and utter ruin. The heart's life also will suffer even unto death, if the strain of its noblest sympathies be never relaxed. It cannot bear the perpetual tension, either of wrath against evil, or exultation in what is lovely. The holiest sorrow becomes morbid, and the power of joy exhausts itself. Pity maunders into weakness, and love is transformed into idolatry, if we attempt to break this law of our nature.

Further, weariness comes at times even to the relief of the spiritual faculty, and gives the half-awakened spirit its first lessons in the mighty art of faith. There is no "resting in God" with most of us until we have learnt the lesson, that we *must* rest somewhere; nor until, wearied and exhausted in our search after truth or consolation, we have been ready to lie down in despair, and say that neither are to be found. It is true that this weariness of spirit does not necessarily lead to "rest in the Lord." It may end in fearful slumber and wild dreams. The vision that passes before the mind in that slumber may be like that of Eliphaz, ever making the inquiry, "Shall mortal man be more just than God—shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" And in

view of His awful holiness we may shrink away abashed and confounded—scorched by the nearness of His great glory. Perhaps we have been eagerly seeking to reconcile God's truth to our own standards; to adjust Jehovah's attributes for Him; to enter the kingdom of heaven like a man, with violence, and not as "a little child." Perhaps we have been striving to fill up the bottomless abyss of need in our hearts with our own merits, and we find the undertaking impossible. Now, at length, beaten with the struggle, and ceasing our efforts, we may be taking an enforced rest; we may just lie quiet for a time, and this may seem to be "a rest in God;" while, on the contrary, it is only an inevitable pause in our fruitless endeavour, a lull of energy by which the mind recovers its power of self-inflation. But if, on the other hand, we say to ourselves, 'Let us arise and go at once to our Father; let us fall back, not on our weakness, but on God's strength; not on our merit, but on His promise; not on our philosophy, but on Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,'—if we come to the simple conclusion that Christ is the truth, and that should it prove that He has deceived us, and is not the truth of God and man, then TRUTH is not worth having, and nobody has ever found it through all these millenniums, and we too can live and die without it,—if we, like the prodigal son, no longer think in our extreme want of still deeper degradation, but at once begin to ponder the helplessness of our souls, and the affluence of our

Father's heart, and if we in utter exhaustion, and as a forlorn hope, do but cry unto Him, "We are weak, but Thou, O God, art strong; we are weary, but Thou slumberest not; we believe, help Thou our unbelief,"—if we fall even in despondency and distrust upon divine promise, and in the spirit of utter venture and awful weariness of soul cast ourselves on the everlasting arm of God, and leave the end and the issue to His incomprehensible and mysterious love; then, dear brethren, we have learned a glorious lesson in the sublime art of faith, and in *that* rest from very weariness which supervenes, there shall come something better than the vision of Eli-phaz—a vision as of a ladder that links earth and heaven together, on which the holy angels of our God are ever passing to and fro,—and from that sweet slumber of the soul, we shall awake into a new world, and find it as Jacob did, none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

In a similar way, the mysteries of Providence may sometimes so far baffle the spirit of a Christian man that he wearies himself with the effort to solve them. We may all have found ourselves at times endeavouring to discover how and why events of great and dark import are allowed to happen; why it is that usefulness should be cut short by wicked slander, and polished weapons permitted to rest in their sheath; and why weary months of chilling frost should often precede the harvest; and why warnings should not be given and taken, which might prevent great

disaster; and why the wickedness of the world is not checked, and God's kingdom comes not with universal observation; and why more light does not stream in from the invisible world, and we who long for a clearer knowledge are kept in the dark. Perhaps under the pressure of such thoughts we at times fall back in a kind of desperation on some of the primary truths and settled convictions of the mind. Such a feeling may degenerate into sullenness, or it may sink into an optimism, which is content even with evil; it may end in scepticism, and faithlessness, and fear; but it may rise into something nobler and better, into the deep conviction that it is God, and not man, who rules this universe; that in asking many questions such as these, though we propose them, from a dire and grand necessity of our nature,—agonizing and eternal witness of our origin and destiny,—yet in doing so we are transcending our powers, and treading without guidance on heights where the air is too keen for our minds to respire it, and where onward progress must only bring us to precipices which we cannot climb, to chasms which we dare not cross, and to the thick darkness of God's purposes, and of those secret things which belong to Him alone. Thus we learn anew the lesson of faith, and discover that our only solid resting-place is *not* on the solution of some impenetrable mystery, but on God Himself. Brought to such a state of mind, we no longer cry "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" and "Why hast Thou made me thus?" but,

filled with peace, resting in the Lord, we exclaim, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight," or, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." "God nothing does, or suffers to be done, but I should do myself, could I but see the end of all events as well as He." "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" "Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things."

II. Let us consider another aspect of this question ; that which I have called *the rest of strength*. This is a far higher thing than that which has hitherto occupied our attention. There is not only that kind of spontaneous inevitable repose by which the powers of mind, heart, and spirit are renovated for fresh exertion, but there is that voluntary rest, which is to some extent within our own power ; which is the sign of vigour rather than of weakness, of strong determination rather than of over-taxed effort, of untiring patience rather than of relaxed energy. It is this kind of repose which puts the rein on passion, curbs the eagerness of the aspirant after honour, pleasure, or knowledge, holds us back when we might otherwise rush into danger, and helps us to wait without anxiety for the unfolding of the future. It is this which teaches us to discharge the duty of to-day, not striving to hurry the development of the seeds that have been sown, nor to tear asunder the half-expanded leaves, nor pluck the unripe fruit ; but to stand still and wait for the unfolding of God's

purposes, for the revelation of a design in our handiwork, which—like the reason that underlies the operations of instinct—is not our design, nor our purpose, nor our reason, but the inscrutable purpose of the Supreme God.

This rest of conscious strength is closely associated with every Christian grace, and is as necessary to our success in the conflicts of the divine life, as it is to the culture of our higher nature. Neither faith, nor hope, nor love can be maintained within us without the *rest* of faith, the *rest* of hope, and the *rest* of love. FAITH fights a good fight, which requires the use of sword and shield; we must always be girt about for conflict, but unless faith rests in God, feels after the everlasting arms, throws itself back in loyal trust on His sure word, it will soon be worsted, and be in danger of transforming itself into its own Saviour. We cannot press onward through the wilderness unless we are constantly entering into the rest of God. "We which have believed do enter into rest."

Again, HOPE is a bold spirit, ever longing to press upwards and gaze heavenwards, yearning after more of heaven and Christ; yet even Hope must rest in the fruition of that which God has given, or else being ever deferred it will make the heart sick.

Even LOVE itself is quickened by those quiet hours of patient waiting for the Lord, when it knows that it is being loved sublimely and supremely, and feels that there is being silently distilled into the soul that

deep sense of Divine Love and tenderness which shall afterwards fire all the ardour of its Godlike passion, and bear it onward to the very heart and throne of God.

PRAYER too, however importunate, constant, and fervent, must have its hours of rest, and of the waiting for answer and fulfilment. Like Elijah, we must look from the height of Carmel over the great sea for the little cloud which shall arise and cover the sky, in answer to our prayer. We must open our every faculty to receive the Holy Ghost; we must wait with earnest though patient expectation; we must listen for the gentle knocking of the mighty stranger at the door of our heart; we must wait amid the discords of the world and the swoop of the storm through the wilderness, and when the strong wind rends the mountains, and the earthquake and the fire follow in wild succession,—for the still small voice,—we must “rest in the Lord, and still wait patiently for Him.”

Our WORK too must be a perpetual waiting for God. We must endeavour in all that we do to be conscious of the strength of God; to discern the line that is drawn between our own work and God’s work, whether in preaching or recommending the gospel by our lives: and while we make use of *His* strength we must beware that we do not attempt to do what is specifically His work. In our commonest duty we may have the assured conviction that we are handling infinite powers, and can rest in them. Thus a helms-

man when he grasps the wheel, or a captain when he issues his orders, takes it for granted that the great powers of nature will continue to act; that the command he has over some of them is no delusion, and in every direction he rests in *them*, not in himself. And so in all our work, when we are dealing with God's redemption, the complete provision He has made for human need, the ample vindication of His own justice, the perfect sacrifice that He has accepted, we must never forget to rest in *them*, as the great revelation of Him, or rather to rest in Him through them; and we must not try over and above our strength to produce parallel results without them, or to force feelings which do not spontaneously arise. It often requires all our strength "to sit still" and believe in the love of God, and even to augment our confidence in that love, when what we think to be our proper interests are disregarded, and apparently trifled with, and perhaps in our view utterly sacrificed. The philosopher maunders to us about "general laws," and "the good of the whole;" the unafflicted Christian does what is little better, he suggests a few of the commonplaces of consolation; and the kind but unappreciating friend will perhaps quite to his own satisfaction prove to us how admirable is the vindication which is made of God's fatherliness, even in the event which sweeps away all our brightest prospects, smites dead our highest ambition or tenderest affection, and turns us into stone as we gaze upon it.

It may, under some such circumstances, have revealed strength of character when the mighty wail of proud defiance has broken from the wounded spirit. Moses, Job, David, Jeremiah, have immortalized their agony by the impetuosity with which they rang its awful changes from their breaking hearts; but there was a higher exercise of faith and strength, in the power to sit still and wait patiently as David did, when he spake those words which the God-man alone could fitly adopt, and when from the depth of a calamity that was well-nigh insupportable he could say to his fellow-sufferers, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust!" It is easy enough for us to idolize our circumstances, and fancy them to be God; to trust in the Lord when He reveals Himself in comfort and friendship and joy, and in the hope of heaven; it is easy to rest in the Lord when we have transformed into God some curious complication of providences, some special nest that we have feathered for ourselves;—but it is hard to do so when that to which our faith clings with convulsive grasp shews itself to be but the hiding of His power, the *robe* of God, and *not* His hand. The difficulty, however, arises chiefly from our desire to submit God's will and ways to the same kind of mental grasp and investigation that we are accustomed to give to human affairs. His children cannot sound His deep designs, nor by searching find Him out. Human wisdom is soon fathomed, but when we sail down that shallow stream and launch out into the great

ocean of God's thought, and try to sound the depth of His designs, we are at once baffled, and cry aloud, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" We cannot reach the eternal stillnesses that lie underneath the surface-agitations of the sea of thought, but nevertheless these deep waters will bear our weight if we trust them, and wait patiently. Many a time would the faith of God's people have been overturned unless this principle had been in earnest exercise. Reflect on the horrors of the pagan persecutions of Christianity, the schisms of the early Church, the superstitions into which it sank, the worship of the beast and his image, the confusion and puerility of some of its greatest thinkers, the perversity of its logic, the cruelty of some of its promoters, the worldliness of its professors, the vices and the wars that have desolated its fairest fields! How is it that the Church has survived all this? that the very elect have not been deceived and drawn back unto perdition? Because they have waited for the Lord, and rested simply in Him.

At this moment it is the same answer alone which can explain to us the fact that the selfishness of some, the infidelity of others, and the lukewarmness of many, have not disheartened the faith and unwound the clasping arms of Christ and His Church. For as we study the history of the Christian Church, it becomes perfectly evident that the violation of this

advice has been the cause of the greatest evils. The erection of a sacerdotal priesthood within the Church, what is it but an impatient distrust of the High-Priesthood of Christ? What is the vast hierarchy of saints and angels, whose merits and intercessions are supposed to be accessible to the prayers of the faithful, but an unwillingness to rest in the boundless merit of Christ's righteousness, or to wait patiently for the full effect of *His* intercession whom the Father heareth always? What are the ambitious efforts of philosophers to solve the mysteries of faith, but the result of an indisposition to rest in God's Word and to wait patiently for its own vindication? The cause of the fierceness of many theological controversies has been a hasty wish to take God's responsibilities upon our little, overburdened shoulders, instead of casting our burden on the Lord. Too often it has arisen from confidence in a dogma rather than in the Master Himself, and from a vain endeavour to hurry with restless eagerness out of the regions of faith, into those of deduction, demonstration, and sight.

III. In what has hitherto been advanced, I have spoken of rest in God as a preliminary or needful stimulus of faith. I have now briefly to allude to a third form of this great duty and privilege—the rest of victory which flows out of deep faith; that peace with God which Jesus gives, which passes all understanding. Here patience has her perfect work, and is entire, wanting nothing. “The Lord is my Shepherd,” says the holy Psalmist, “I shall want nothing;”

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This is delighting in God; this is entering into God's rest; this is the calm and holy confidence which can remove mountains, and can make a poor child of the dust into an heir of all the promises of God.

If we heartily accept all that is ministered to the soul's health, renewal, and salvation in the brotherhood, the sacrifice, the covenanted love of Christ, and find out that "God, willing to shew more abundantly unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, has confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the gospel;" if we have made these discoveries, we have found also that our difficulties have vanished, that mysterious disappointments have resolved themselves into mercy, and that there is a God-like ending to all God's providence; at evening time a light, in death a victory, in heaven a sure reward. Mysteries in the future there must be to all finite intelligence. Days and hours are known only to the Father. Angels in heaven wait patiently for the full revelation; the Son Himself on His mediatorial throne waits, expecting until His enemies be made His footstool. The whole creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. The future life must be wrapt in obscurity. If we knew much

more about it we might find it still more difficult to *wait*, but the victory that we gain by faith is a victory of waiting patiently for the Lord's own triumph over all the obstacles which unbelief and sin have put even in His way. The senses may provoke our impatience, the flesh may sting us into angry reproachfulness, the devil may accuse and attempt to deceive us, but by resting in the Lord we shall gain the victory. The world of ambition, of business, of Christless joys, of perishable attractions, and delusive treasures, may never leave us unmolested; but "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Let us wait patiently for Him who waited long for us, and may we who have learned to wait patiently in the vestibule of the temple, wait before the throne, and rest for ever in the bosom of our God!

SERMON VIII.

CONSECRATION OF WORD AND THOUGHT.

PSALM XIX. 14.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

As this Psalm is in all probability the production of David, and as modern criticism has not put its authorship in question, it reveals in a surprising way the sense which the great minstrel entertained of the majesty, beauty, comprehensiveness, and value of the law of God. He was a child of nature, a man whose mind had long pondered the mystery and majesty of creation. He had watched the stars, and waited for the dawn, while keeping his sheep in the fields of Bethlehem. He, like every other Oriental, must at times have "felt his heart secretly enticed, when he saw the moon walking in her brightness" over the star-strewn plains of space. He must have heard from every side of him, echoes of the proud titles and sounding praise offered to the sun, and could hardly free himself from the thought

of the personality of that great hero of the sky, who rejoiced as a strong man to run his race: yet through the high training of the law of God and the blessed inspirations of the Almighty, David could dare, high priest and poet of nature as he was, to laugh to scorn the pantheism of Egypt, the sun-worship of Elam, the adoration of the sky which formed the basis of the worship of all the Aryan tribes, and the mad rites of Baal and Ashtaroath, and to exclaim, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork;" "In them hast Thou set a tabernacle for the sun."

'The Heavens,' those gods of the nations; 'the Sun,' whose praises were sung in awful strains, whose favour was being propitiated by varied sacrifices, from the mountains of India to the wilds of Thrace, from the Euphrates to the cataracts of the Nile, were felt by the shepherd-boy and by the minstrel king to be but the creatures, the messengers, and the ministers of Jehovah.

How much was involved in this language we must go back to the age of David fitly to apprehend. Yet great, and dazzling, and sublime as were these manifestations of God, they were as nothing compared with another display of the character of Jehovah, which he then proceeds to celebrate. The Psalmist declares the law of God to be more perfect than the half-deified sun; the statutes of God to be brighter than the stars; and the judgments of God from their righteousness and truth to be his own most

costly possession. Such raptures about "the law of the Lord" do not look as though the very idea of "Jehovah" had only just been given to the world. Such enthusiasm for God's judgments and statutes is incredible, if, as some would have us believe, the first fragments of the Romance of the Pentateuch were just then getting into circulation among the sons of the prophets. The Psalm reveals the mighty force of great ideas that had been strong enough from his childhood to shield the mind of David from the dominant and crushing paganism of the East, and witnesses to his deep faith in the revelation of the law and grace of God.

It is a new utterance of David's profound and awful reverence for the law of God, that at the conclusion of the noble prayer-song he should have said, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer:" for seldom have words been more worthy, seldom, if ever, have thoughts been more profound and reverential, more fit to be offered up to the Holy One, as an acceptable sacrifice, a fragrant incense. The words of my text may be regarded as the act of sacrifice and dedication which David made of certain words which he had just fashioned for Jehovah's praise; and they may be regarded as a comprehensive prayer, which included a large portion of David's life. Therefore we shall consider them in these two lights:—first, as an act of sacrifice, which men in these days also have

power to offer; and secondly, as a prayer which may include a large proportion of our lives.

I. Let us consider the utterance of the text as an act of sacrifice and dedication to God which a devout man may make of both words and thoughts. In other words, a man may, like David, so order the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart, that they will prove to be an acceptable sacrifice. I use the word 'sacrifice,' because the Psalmist does employ in my text a term which perpetually recurs in Leviticus and elsewhere, when the acceptance of a sacrifice is spoken of. God had appointed a series of ceremonial acts, which though they were not morally beautiful, yet from their typical character and their expression of the yearnings and petitions of His worshippers, were "acceptable in His sight." It was not practically possible to keep the whole law of God. It was not within the range of human endeavour to atone for transgression; it was not possible to offer unto God sufficient expression of gratitude for His mercies. But God had provided a way in which man's great unutterable needs could find expression. He accepted a ceremonial obedience, which was possible even to the minutest point of required observance. He received the sin-offering of the great day of atonement. He had respect to these sacrifices in virtue of the perfect submission to the Eternal Will which would be yielded by Him who would prove to be "the second Adam," the Son and Jehovah of David, the King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Again, God had a right to demand the most entire thankfulness, the most complete and thorough acknowledgment of His great goodness ; but in default, as it were, of such unreserved and genuine gratitude, He accepted a thank-offering, He approved a ceremonial dedication—such as the waving of a sheaf in His temple—as a temporary acknowledgment, a confession of the imperfection of all our gratitude, and a prophecy of the day when in a more perfect tabernacle, on higher terms, in nobler fashion, God's priests should offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through Jesus Christ.

A sacrifice or thank-offering “before the Lord,” or “in the sight of God,” according to the legal phrase, was an embodied prayer, was a confession of weakness, and a cry for help. In a similar way we may regard an act of prayer, or of meditation, or of praise, as a sacrifice presented before the Lord for His acceptance. Such an act is the submission of self to God, and to that extent a divine consecration of the man who offers it.

When a Hebrew presented a thank-offering or a trespass-offering before the Lord, it was possible for him to know that it conformed entirely to the divine requirement. The details of the law of God are so exact that the worshipper might conform in every particular to the revealed injunctions of the holy Law. But how can we offer anything to the Most High which is not defiled with sin? We feel that the bias of our being is to sin; that when we would

do good, evil is present with us: our will is hampered, our affections are stronger than our judgment, our material nature overrides our spiritual life; we are often the victims, as it seems to us, of the old Adam, and of adverse circumstances; "Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" "We are all as an unclean thing, we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away;" "Wherewithal shall we come before the High God?" What shall we offer up to the Lord that is not defiled?

We cannot modify the fundamental character of our mind. We feel that deep in our inner nature there is an individuality, a personality altogether behind, within, above our will; which we can no more alter than we can add to our stature or change our features. There is much of our nature, our disposition, our temper, that is what we call involuntary and uncontrollable. We are in bondage to sin, in servitude to beggarly elements; and to render up ourselves to God seems impossible. To take our whole nature to God, to write holiness to the Lord on every part of ourselves; to get, as it were, underneath our secret motives and innate disposition, and offer our whole nature to the Lord, may seem utterly beyond our power. But, my brethren, here are two things that we *can* offer to Him; here are two things that we can present before Him, and that we may hope to make acceptable in His sight,—“The words of our mouth, and the meditations of our heart.” There

is a definiteness, a speciality, a voluntariness about these things, so that in spite of strong temptations, and grievous corruption, and much distraction of mind, they may be consecrated unto the Lord, and be acceptable in His sight. It is by making such consecration to Him, that the empire of God over us, the kingdom of God within us, is ever widening, and that more words and more meditations become His. However evil our hearts, our words are our own, and we are not compelled to use them by any inward or outward force. If we sin with our lips, we transgress voluntarily, and because we choose to do so. An unkind speech, an idle word, a lie, a profane oath, a slander, an unclean jest, a misrepresentation, have never dropped from human lips without wilful sin. There is nothing so much in our power as are the words of our mouth. It is possible for us to utter holy things, to speak God's praise, to breathe forth kindness in pure and gentle words, or it is possible for us to force our lips to silence, and make our words few. If affection, and generosity, and gratitude are so alien from our hearts that for us to speak them would be a series of falsehoods, we have the power of holding our peace and sealing our lips. It seems, then, fitting that of all things we should regard our words as material for sacrifice, which, notwithstanding our conscious sinfulness, we may offer up and make acceptable unto God. We cannot change our heart, my brethren, but we *can*, if we will, entirely change our speech. We

may bring words to God that are acceptable to Him.

Perhaps some man exclaims that his temper has overmastered him ; that he is possessed by the devil ; that he cannot govern his own thoughts ; that he never offers one word of prayer, or feels the disposition to praise ; that volleys of wicked words issue from his lips, and that his words cannot be acceptable to God. I reply, As far as ' words ' are concerned, my brother, you have simply and solely yourself to blame. However hot your passion, you are not forced to speak ; for God has given you power to hold your tongue. It is pure absurdity to put down those curses, or those noisy slanderous words of yours, to your own depravity, or to Adam, or to the devil. You have only your present self to blame, and neither Adam nor the devil will bear a particle of the responsibility. There are certain devilish words that even *you* would not utter in the hearing of a child ; there are others that you would repress if a holy man were standing by your side ; there are many which your instinctive reverence for the sanctuary would have the power to hush. These simple facts may do much to convince you that dominion over the tongue is given you, and that it is within your power to present to God even words that may be acceptable to Him. Just as the Israelite, whoever he might be, whatever had been his history, whatever was his character, might find in the long list of sacrifices some one that was so applicable to his own

case that he might present an acceptable offering unto the Lord, so, I insist upon it, that whoever you may be, there are words which, as tokens of your approach to the Most High God, will be abundantly acceptable to Him. These words may be, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" or, "Behold, I am vile!" They may speak the truth to Him and reveal your great necessities; they may declare your inability to utter more; but it is obvious that there are words which it were acceptable for the most consciously vile to speak unto God. So much the more true is it of the man who is "seeking glory, honour, and immortality," and whose heart has taught him to "bless the Lord at all times," and who is abundantly disposed to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord." To such a one it is perfectly legitimate to say,—"You, my brother, you also can find acceptable words of prayer, and praise, and promise; and if you cannot do so, you too may hold your peace even from good. The words of your mouth form the sacred material of a holy sacrifice. May God's word and your own conscience guide you to order your conversation aright! May the outpourings of your soul, like this great prayer-song of David, reveal such conscious communion with God, such a sense of His majesty and glory, such love to the revelation of His will, that your mouth may be filled with holy gladness, and your lips with happy song, and God the Lord accept it!"

The meditations of the heart are, at first sight, far less fitting matter for sacrifice. It may be said that

meditations are involuntary; that trains of thought, that the motions of the inward life are beyond our mastery; that we may pray about these, but cannot control them; that we may implore their sanctification, but cannot sanctify them, or any part of them, ourselves. Now, I believe that the word 'meditation' expresses a very marked distinction between involuntary thoughts or wishes and the thoughts which are pondered and dwelt upon. By 'meditation' is really meant the voluntary consideration of any subject, the responsible revolving of a topic or matter of thought. God has given us the power of dwelling upon a theme, of reviewing it in all its aspects, of concentrating our attention upon it, of fixing and binding our minds to its contemplation. When our intellect is sane, we have also the power of deliberately withdrawing our thought from the contemplation of an unwelcome and unholy theme, of ceasing to think of that from which we recoil. We are not responsible to God for thoughts which cross our mind uninvited; nor for suggestions made to us by the devil; nor for mental results arising out of our organism, or our circumstances; nor for ideas that are forced upon us by the efforts or example of others. We are wrong if we blame ourselves for some of these. God pities, and does not censure us for those states of mind for which we are irresponsible, but from which we suffer. Therefore we cannot make a sacrifice to God of those involuntary thoughts, whether they be good or evil.

On the other hand, we are eminently responsible for the reception we give to such thoughts; for the way in which we endeavour to repress the evil and encourage the good. Now, the topic that is deeply pondered, the indulgence that is secretly considered, the project that excites the most restless and ceaseless attention, the prevailing and voluntarily continued matter of thought, is our '*meditation*.' This, like our voluntary words, may be acceptable to God as the sacrifice or offering of our hearts.

In an act of homage like that which David here consummated, doubtless his meditation was more extensive than his words. He had deeper thoughts than he put into words; he was, in fact, crowding into a short Psalm of fourteen verses the often-prolonged meditation of his heart. He had pondered the excellence of God's creation; he had felt messages coming to him from the silent stars, and from the blessed dawn, and from the blazing heat of day; messages of divine truth and goodness, power, and glory; and yet he felt that Jehovah's law was something nobler still, His judgments true and righteous altogether. These long-continued thoughts finding at last expression in this divine "song of praise," are offered with it to the Most High. How often do words fail to express all we feel, and how often fall short of the impression that has been made upon us! We hardly dare to put into words our deepest need. There are groanings unutterable; there are desires beyond expression; sometimes soaring into heaven and in-

finite glory ; as often sinking down into unmentionable depths, into the very "belly of hell, where the earth and its bars seem above us for ever." These constitute the meditations of our mind, all we ask or think. Meditations are determinations of our mind to fix themselves upon certain themes, and to forsake others ; and this power is more or less bestowed even upon the weakest minds. A meditation on our own desert, a meditation on our Father's glory, or on His holy truth, or the continued consideration of His nature and promises, cannot fail to be sacrifice acceptable to Him.

There is immense advantage in this effort of mind, for it familiarizes the soul with God ; it renders the whole nature more spiritual, more aware of its own world of realities. The habit of meditation is the best preventive of wandering thoughts in prayer, being in itself the highest kind of prayer. It lays a deeper foundation of religious experience, the whole fabric of which becomes more beautiful and safe. It ploughs up the fallow ground of our nature, and introduces new and healthy vigorous seed into the hitherto unused part of our mental constitution. Even those meditations which are originated or continued with a distinct purpose of distracting the mind from dark or suspicious, or morbid or voluptuous fancies, or evil projects, though they should have no religious character in themselves, may be a noble battle of soul, and prove abundantly acceptable to Him who is our strength and our Redeemer.

If we ponder a great thought, or meditate a noble principle, if we place ourselves in contact and relation with some glorious fact and allow its mighty influence to penetrate our souls, we become alive to all the majesty of that thought, or fact, or principle, and we can and may offer up thus our meditation to our Father. The sacrifice thus made becomes a large portion of ourselves; it is the wave-sheaf, declaring that all the harvest is God's. We cannot present a meditation to God, uncover as it were the veil of our hearts to His searching glance, without much holy resolve, and bitter penitence; or without vigorous effort to reduce the unlawful desires, and check the dangerous anxieties, and sift and spiritualize the character of all our other thoughts. Such a sacrifice is necessary to complete the idea of an uttered prayer. The notion that we could pray 'out all our infinite need, or utter to God all our praise, or even confess all our sins to Him, is absurd; but there is vast advantage in the endeavour to bare even a portion of our nature to His glance, and to feel claimed of Him altogether as His own.

So far the lesson of my text implies that we may take a train of hallowed thought, a deliberate and earnest endeavour after divine life; a voluntary meditation on truth or righteousness, on sin or doom, on heaven or God; and we may throw some portion of the meditation into spoken words; and conscience and God's Word tell us that so entirely is the whole

process brought under the power of our will, and made a matter of conscious responsibility, that we may present and offer it to God on the altar of spiritual sacrifice, with a perfect knowledge and expectation that He will have respect unto the sacrifice, in virtue of our relation to Him who is the *Eternal Word*, and the *Eternal Meditation* of God. But it would limit the text very unnecessarily to deprive us of the advantage of it, unless we have a meditation and a song like this of David's, which we wish to offer to God. If this be all the use that we can make of the idea of my text, how often must we hold our peace! How often would silence fall even on the songs of Zion, and a strange hush cast its paralyzing spell on human worship! The text, however, does not simply give the priestly words with which this fragrant incense was burned in the holy place of thought, but—

II. It may be regarded as a comprehensive prayer. In other words, David did not merely express a desire that the meditation of his heart and the words of his mouth—when this noble Psalm rang from the strings of his harp—might be acceptable to God, but he prayed as we may do, that all his words and all his meditations might under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost be well-pleasing to God. "*All the words of my mouth.*" How much is involved in that expression!

(1) There are all the secret voices which my mind makes use of to tell itself about itself; all my soliloquy,

all my half-uttered thought, all my interjections of impatience, all my purposes when they are just shaping themselves to my mind, and I whisper them on my bed, or elsewhere, to myself alone. There is all the expression which I give when entirely alone to my idea of myself; there is included all my secret pride, and unconfessed vanity, when it needs but a single word to reveal itself.

(2) Then, "All the words of my mouth" will include all my relations with fellow-man, all mutual converse, all the expression of my friendship, and of my sympathy in the distress of others. They will include the way in which I treat the sin of others, whether with solemnity or indifference, with sympathy or harshness; or with that reproof which is as "an excellent oil that will not break the head." "All the words of my mouth" must include all the falsehoods and the slanders that I have spoken, the impurities as well as the praises which I have uttered. Every idle word, all the foolish talking, all the cruelty, the shallowness, the heartlessness of my speech is in this phrase summoned unto the altar of God. This expression includes, further, all the power that man has to communicate to others the spirit that is in him, or to conceal it. It means all the utterance of the soul, all the teaching of the wise, all the professions of the hypocrite, all the "death and life that are in the power of the tongue."

In this comprehensive phrase is included, if I be a preacher, all the way in which I dare to speak

to my fellow-man ;—all the shifts of my ignorance, all the feebleness of my arguments, all the unworthiness of my motive, all the narrowness of my heart, all the vanity of my so-called eloquence. If I be a statesman or politician, an author or a lecturer, or if in any way whatsoever I am trying to communicate my thoughts to my brother-man, here I have a phrase which will grasp all my powers, and include all my claptrap, and will leave nothing that is mine, beyond the range of this earnest prayer. If this is my prayer, I must wish to make all my uttered thought acceptable to God, to conduct my whole life with the feeling of His awful presence and the craving of His smile.

(3) The words of my mouth include all that I say unto God ; all the sudden and ejaculatory cries of my soul in the hour of my peril ; all the burst of gratitude for unnumbered mercies ; all the praise of the sanctuary, and all the voice of my prayer and my supplication. If I sum up in this respect all the words of my mouth, they will suggest my sad omissions of holy duty, all the leanness and coldness of my words, all the dishonesty of many of my confessions, all the meagre, formal, heartless praise that has often mingled with my professed communion with the living God. If I were duly alive to God, how much I might say to the God of my life ! Instead of my praise being the occasional, almost exceptional language of my soul, it would be the burden of my whole life to bless the Lord.

Instead of angrily and morbidly telling Him of my desperate folly and stupid unbelief, my whole existence would be a song of joyful, intelligent praise.

(4) The meditations of the heart include even a larger share of human existence than the words of the mouth. It has been already said that we do not understand by 'meditations' the passing thoughts which are beyond control, but all those deeper trains of considered thought which do in fact constitute the likings and dislikings of the soul. These meditations reveal the habitual objects of reverence or distrust; the whole empire of fear, hope, and suspicion; of faith, prayerfulness, and love. Now, my brethren, if this text is a prayer that all these things may be acceptable in the sight of God, it sweeps up into itself a large portion of our whole being. The prayer itself is a holy prayer, for "this is the will of God, even our sanctification." A great point is gained when we sincerely desire to present ourselves as living sacrifices; to submit our minds to the Divine inspection, to welcome the Most High to our inmost heart. We cannot do this without feeling that the Lord is always before us, without a perpetual remembrance of the eyes that are as a flame of fire. All our commonest business must then be done with the conviction upon us that we are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. If we pray these words to our Father, we are bringing into His holy place a desire for perfect sanctification.

If our words and meditations are acceptable to God, it is clear that more and more of our life must daily be brought under His influence. If we pray to God to help us never to utter an impure speech, never to tell a profane story, never deliberately to ponder any unwholesome poisonous topic of thought, the source of evil, the polluting streams which have often defiled us will not be approached, and our inward life will take another direction. If we meditate and talk over our wrongs, and vexations, and disappointments, we deepen all the impression that they have made upon us, we aggravate our passions, excite our evil tempers, and degrade our souls. If we are set on holding our peace, on turning away our thoughts from themes that provoke our licentiousness, our rebellion against God's providence, our evil tempers and hardness, God helps us to be strong; we gain fresh control over ourselves, and we become more pure and charitable, more submissive and Christlike.

If our thoughts and words are habitually of higher matters than those furnished by earthly fellowship, if we resolutely ponder the glory of God, the love of Christ, the character of Jesus, we shall find at length that no effort is required; we shall turn our minds easily, instinctively, to the everlasting love, and our words will flow freely towards the fountain of all grace.

It is not here on earth that the prayer can be fully answered. Not till we serve Him day and night in

His temple, till our lips are tuned to everlasting praise, shall we understand all that we have asked for. May our meditations now be so sweet that our rapture shall then be perfect, and our words now be so much in harmony with His will that they shall be the beginnings of the song that circles the eternal throne!

SERMON IX.

GOD'S HOLINESS AND MAN'S.

1 PETER I. 16.

It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

THERE is in this passage a vivid illustration of the position, that the doctrines, the moral principles, and the manifest purpose of the Old and New Testaments are identical. The symbol, the ordinance of the Old Covenant, and the clothing of Old Testament truth, were less clear, less direct, than are the symbol, the ordinance, the prophecy, the history of the New Testament. In the one case, much that was national, temporary, and local was associated with the revelation of God. The truth on this account is less obvious to us, is indirect in its influence upon us, and often appears partial and contracted in its aim. But from the Cross of Christ, the Word of God sounds forth for the whole world; and the good tidings chanted over the manger at Bethlehem were "unto all people." Therefore the considerations to which appeal is made have perpetually a universal

reference. It must however be allowed, that in Christ the fundamental truth of the Old Covenant is re-asserted, and recapitulated, and re-affirmed, and "in Him all the promises of God are Yea and Amen."

The passage before us shews in a striking manner that under *both* dispensations the highest motive to holiness was urged, that under both revelations the noblest reason for moral excellence in man was presented. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." How full of expression, how full of meaning, was the peculiar title by which God condescended to be addressed by His chosen people!—"The Holy One of Israel." In their estimation He was emphatically "THE HOLY ONE." There was not another to whom they felt that this sublime perfection could be attributed. This one Being received their homage. "Thou only art Holy" was their humble cry. Their prophet heard a mighty chorus of seraphim, each ardent with rapture, each emulating the other's devotion; and the ceaseless song of perfect intelligence merged into this, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts!" The title, the mighty name, on which Isaiah loved to dilate more than upon any other, was "Holy One of Israel;" and he is ever telling us that this "Holy One" was the God of Israel, and that self-existent holiness was the perfection under which Jehovah had especially revealed Himself to His people. It was not

necessary to distinguish more closely or accurately that glory which He could not give to another. The great burden of Isaiah's teaching was, that this Holy One of Israel was the Lord of Hosts; that the whole universe was but the shadow of His might; that He had created all things; that there was no other God; that while all the gods of the nations were idols, Jehovah had made the heavens. •

Moreover, throughout the Old Testament the holiness of God is made a sufficient, yea, the highest reason, why those who recognized this fact and this perfection of His nature should be holy too. God had revealed His holiness to Israel; and He wished them to consider it the "beauty" of His nature. If we take a portrait of a man, we try to represent his face, not his hand, nor his back, nor his foot; we try to delineate his beauty, to refresh our minds with that which is most memorable and distinguishing in his exterior semblance; so, while the hand, the finger of God denote His power and skill, and His throne is used for majesty and dominion, He considers His holiness as the true lustre of His character, as that by which He will be best known. We read of "the beauty of His holiness," that He is "glorious in holiness;" and that this beauty of the Lord is to be found in His holy temple.

It is refreshing to find the clearest possible indication that such was the distinguishing characteristic of the worship of Israel. In Egypt, in Greece, in India, in Assyria, in Asia Minor, in Italy; whatever

gleams of truth about the nature of God may have alighted on some of their temples, or may have irradiated some of their seers; however clear scepticism may have been about the folly of the popular rites, and however bitter may have been the sarcasm and caricature with which all religion was treated by satirist and philosopher, yet in all these countries it is certainly true that ceremonies the most debasing, that rites the most disgusting, were practised under the name of religious worship; that conceptions the most foul and ideas the most impure and revolting were dignified with the name of deities. Yet we have the sublime, the supernatural spectacle of an obscure tribe of men, who recognized no other God than their "Holy One," who were distinguished from all other nations by being separated from sin, and who felt that nothing short of holiness befitted "the house of their God." "The High and Lofty One who inhabited eternity" bore in their creed a mighty name: it was no other than this, "Holy;" and no worship could be acceptable in His sight, no rites could lift the soul heavenwards, which were not holy. As their God was distinguished from all other gods by the dazzling holiness of His nature, so they were to be distinguished from all other people by their purity, their moral excellence, their resemblance to Him. The new relation in which they found that they were standing to the Holy God, the obligations under which He had placed them, the gratitude that He could claim from their hearts, the attraction of

His love, the human cords, the loving hands by which He drew them to Himself, all insisted upon their holiness; and so we find it written in the Law of Moses, "I am the Lord your God; therefore shall ye sanctify yourselves;" and "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy;" "I am the Lord your God, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." And again, "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God, and ye shall keep My statutes and do them; I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." Again we find it written, "Ye shall be holy unto Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine." Israel was taught to "Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness," to "Glory in His holy name, to exalt the Lord God, and worship at His holy hill," because "The Lord God was holy." The Psalmist and the prophets, like the pillars in the temple of their God, all palpitate with the light of His holiness, and are moved with the voice of the seraphs' song; they are dark with this excessive brightness, and by the holy service that they rendered shed on mankind the luminous principle, that the holiness of God is the chief reason for the holiness of man.

Further, when the Apostle Peter is shewing believers in Christ that they are "a chosen generation," "a royal priesthood," that they have been called by the Father out of the bondage in which all nature lies fettered, and are brought through a

wilderness of discipline and through fiery trials which are meetening them for joys unspeakable and full of glory, he tells them that the same law prevails, the same lesson is conveyed, the same principle involved. The holiness of the Father supplies the reason why those who can speak more confidently of His character and personal relation to themselves than ancient Israel ever could have done, must be holy too. The character of God and His relation to His children is the highest incentive to holiness which can be conceived by the great Apostle. There is a world of meaning in that little word 'because,' for it binds the two dispensations together, and the bond is a link of purest gold. That which reveals to the Christian the holiness of the divine character, is of a higher order than that which flashed the same truth upon the mind of the ancient Hebrew. The fact and the consideration, the practical duty, the bright prospect, the living truth, which made Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others feel that God is holy, was of less general interest, of lower intensity, of humbler pitch, than that which the meanest mind may now easily apprehend. The holiness of God was as much a reason for the holiness of Israel, as the holiness of our Father is the reason for our holiness. The ancient covenant between God and His people is productive of the same results as the relation between our souls and our Father which is in heaven. Thus it comes to pass that though "the river of the water of life" which has issued out of the throne of God

and of the Lamb looks a very different thing from that which leaped from the mountains of Horeb and dashed down the narrow gorge of Judaism, yet it was the same stream under different aspects, and whoever has drunk at the brink has not afterwards thirsted, and the water thus given him has been within him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Some one may murmur, 'What need have we of the highest motives to holiness? If the result is obtained by lower ones, is not the end of God secured? Suppose that we are frightened into obedience, is not our character, our acceptableness quite enough for us? If we feel that without holiness we can never see God, and must incur the displeasure of the Omnipotent, and precipitate ourselves into bottomless abysses of ruin and misery, and if we therefore abstain from sin, and cultivate holiness, and obey the voice of wisdom, will not this mental condition meet the emergency, and answer the purpose?' I reply, If fear has ever produced within man the right emotions, if it has ever made a man "holy," then of course the moral effect that was desired has been produced, and all is well. But if the fear of consequences has only excited a morbid dread of certain actions, and has therefore made an individual decorous and submissive; if this has led him to trust his soul to any specific for the conscience, to bind himself with innumerable rules, and to darken his life with the shadow of hell; if his fear of God has just,

as far as he is concerned, turned this green earth, these pleasant homes and human affections, and these blessed flowers of love into a gay, perilous crust over some fierce volcano, ever threatening to break forth in murderous fire upon his heart and being; if fear of consequences merely influences the outside of a man, and does not alter his estimate of the sins themselves, he is not holy after all. Take away the fear, and there would be no obedience. Lower motives may often be appealed to, and even employed by God, in order to excite and to regulate our desires after Himself; but they are not sufficient to take away our fear, nor to help us up this arduous ascent. Verily, in order to fulfil the chief end of our being, we need the highest motive, the strongest consideration.

A child's obedience to its parent is often enforced by small promises and puny threats, and without appealing to any higher considerations, a momentary end may be secured, or even an important habit formed; but no judicious or faithful parent is content with such a victory over a child's free-will. Unless the idea of rightness and duty can be inspired, unless the emotion of love is awakened, there is no chance of ultimate obedience, or of any of the other advantages which result from parental authority. If you as parents are governing your children by a succession of treats and threats, you will not inspire their reverence or secure their true obedience. The lower motive may be easier to work, but its opera-

tion is unsatisfactory: it degrades the tone of the mind, even if it improves the external appearance; it lowers the character of a man, even though it may increase his usefulness. The earth-born, fear-woven robe of righteousness will catch fire in the furnace of affliction, and leave the soul destitute when it most needs covering.

Granted, then, that together with other considerations, the lower motives may be advantageous, may produce a mechanical though not a curative effect upon our moral nature; still it is clear that we must aim at the highest ends, and endeavour to put to the proof the most comprehensive words and assurances of God.

Diverse views on the nature and ground of moral obligation have been entertained by conscientious men. Some have found these to consist in the decisions of society; they have sought for them in the will of some emperor, in the common law of a land, in the public opinion of a nation, and have lost sight of all the moral distinctions that subsist, the essential and eternal differences between right and wrong. Others have been content with some form of human judgment, some purely subjective or experimental method of determining the problem. They have spoken of the sympathies of the human soul, of the moral sense, of the emotion of approval or disapproval, as a sufficient explanation of the moral motive, as the ultimate basis of right and wrong. Some men have offered to us carefully-considered though partial

synonyms of the right and good, as though these were competent to explain the fundamental differences between right and wrong, and the essential nature of goodness and virtue. One philosopher has told us that they are identical with 'beauty,' and another with 'truth;' one is content to speak of 'eternal and immutable fitness,' and another of the 'eternal order;' but the most celebrated of these synonyms, one which has secured the adhesion of many great names, is that the 'right' is the 'useful,' the 'advantageous.' Granting that the beautiful and the true, the useful and beneficial, may make known to us the true virtue, may be associated with goodness, still all these synonyms confound the tendencies to virtue with the reasons for it; they confuse the properties and characteristics with the essence of the thing. Instead of seeing that certain courses of action are right and that they therefore lead to happiness, the tables are turned, and it is said, "Certain actions conduce to happiness, *therefore* they are right."

Many have felt that this principle fails, inasmuch as that which is happiness to one is not happiness to another, and it could not be right for one man to do a thing which, under similar circumstances, it was wrong for another to do; and they have modified the theory thus, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the groundwork and exposition of virtue;" but the profound difficulty of applying this principle has demonstrated its unsatisfactory

nature, and has led to the modified explanation, that the general consequences of actions on the widest scale, and in the long run, are the indication of the will of God, and constitute their moral nature. And persons holding this latter view have been practically careless about the origin of the impression that virtue is good and vice is evil, and they have fallen back on tradition or revelation or custom to assist them in the discovery of the general and universal consequence, thus virtually relinquishing their own explanation of the origin and ultimate essence of the moral judgment.

A class of thinkers who have meant by their philosophy to glorify God, have maintained that right and wrong are entirely regulated by His will; that He could if He chose have reversed the position of these things; have called that good which was evil; and that which was evil, good. This is perhaps the most dangerous theory of all, because under its influence we could neither feel nor know that God was holy and just in Himself. The sceptre in the hand of God has thus been gilded with the little theories of man; and sometimes it has snapped, from the efforts made by men to load it with honour.

However, it is not only in theory, but in practice, that men have found lower motives answer their purpose than that which is specified in my text. That which is likely to conduce to our interests, reputation, or comfort, that which will flatter our pride and excuse our negligence, is often allowed to justify

a gross dereliction of principle, and to supply a determining motive for our conduct. There are many persons who are led by indirect and arduous processes to do that which is holy, without themselves being holy. There are many who are satisfied with the advantages that accompany rectitude, with the 'profitableness' of godliness, with the way in which it conduces to external prosperity and secures the esteem and respect of the great world. There are many who are honest in their dealings because they are too proud to overreach; who remain chaste because they are jealous; who do generous things to gratify their vanity and secure applause; who are religious because it is respectable; who hold certain opinions, ecclesiastical or spiritual, because such a course is politic; who profess to be religious for the sake of the credit that it gains for them; who emulate martyrdom because they love fame. Now, I know no better way of aiming a blow at the heart of all this self-delusion, than by calling your attention to that highest motive by which it is possible for a human being to be influenced, and I can do it with the aid of my text. "It is written," my brethren, in the Law of God; it is written in letters of fire; it is written on the tables of stone; it is written on the pinnacles of the eternal temple, and is legible by the light of uncreated glory; it is written as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond; it is written upon the tablet of men's hearts, and on the horns of their

altars; it is written in the blood of Christ, and upon every page of New Testament promise; it is written by the finger of God in the whole history of His Church; it is written, so that Adam found it inscribed on every flower that gladdened Paradise, and Abel saw it gleaming in the embers of his accepted sacrifice; Moses proclaimed it from Sinai, and David repeated it in a thousand ringing notes of praise; Isaiah thundered it along the line of prophecy to Micah, to Zechariah, to Malachi, and John the Baptist; the Holy One Himself took up the words and pressed it on the consciences of His disciples; apostles and martyrs bore their ample witness to its truth; philosophy has tried to excel it, and to explain it away, or hide it in other and less potent words; but, there it is, the gladness of all right-hearted men, a sufficient reason for all obedience; Heaven on earth wherever realized, God's great idea of man, embodied. "*It is written*; BE YE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY." Hence we conclude—

I. That the nature of God is the foundation of moral obligation. When we travel in thought to the cause and origin of all things, we perpetually fall back on God as the only solution of the mystery of the universe. The conditions of existence and the laws of nature are inexplicable to us, except as modes of His operation, and revelations to us of His essence. Marks of design, the consciousness of mind, and the phenomena of spiritual life, suggest to us by irresistible logic the existence of the Infinite Intel-

ligence that underlies all creation. In the same way, our moral nature pressing back into ultimate facts for an explanation of the cry, and decision of conscience, says with delight, that God, and God alone, is the Fountain of moral distinctions. We fall down and adore Him, not only as the Creator, but "the Holy One." We cannot take a higher step than this in the comprehension either of creation or conscience. The highest truth of philosophy and the noblest utterance of revelation are here identical,—“Be ye holy, for I am holy.”

In God's nature we find all moral principles, just as in His duration we find eternity, in His omnipotence all the forces of external nature, and in His thought absolute reality and truth. He does not conform to a rule of right existing independently of Himself, nor could He change His nature, nor could He will, that good should be evil, or evil good, any more than He could will Himself out of existence, or undo the past eternity. “I AM THAT I AM” is His name to all generations.

The text assures us that this is the true reason why we should be holy. If the position at which I have hinted be the correct one, God's holiness is that which has made holiness desirable to every intelligence in the universe. His character is the rule of all mind. It is impossible for any mind to be, where this great rule of right is not binding. Every revelation of the character of God will be the revelation of some of the necessary and eternal laws by

which mind is to be constituted and matter governed. All eternal fitnesses of things, all relations that ought to subsist between creatures known to God and provided for in His creation of the universe, are involved in this glorious assurance, "I am holy." That is enough; there is no necessity to expand or weaken the conception by talking of any abstraction of beauty, or order, or fitness, for He fills all things; He gives life and soul to the beings whom He has created. From Him have proceeded all their laws, all their circumstances and relations; and it is most in accordance with this truth that conformity to God's likeness should produce happiness, that existences and relations which have sprung into life from the hands of a holy God should indicate their origin by their power to promote well-being on the grand scale. Their obligation is not, however, dependent on this tendency, but this tendency is a result of their origin.

II. The nature of man makes resemblance to God possible. There are certain points in which we resemble inferior animals, and they are those in which they may be made to imitate us. There is something in common between ourselves and them, so soon as our doing anything becomes a reason for their doing the same thing. These points of unison are very rare, and scarcely engage our attention; yet they are sufficiently numerous to illustrate our resemblance to God. We feel that there are certain perfections of the Divine nature that do not convey to

our minds the slightest argument or reason why we should be like God: thus, God is powerful; He has all power; nothing can resist Him; no opposition to Him can eventually prevail; yet we feel that it would but fall idly on our ears though an inspired prophet had said in the name of the Mighty God, "Be ye powerful, for I am powerful." When, however, truthfulness is the characteristic which is to be enforced, we know with what energy St. Paul urges the consideration, springing from the character of a God who cannot lie; and how he reasons that because "all the promises of God are yea," therefore all the promises of man should be yea also.

Again, God's perfect intelligence supplies no reason why we should possess absolute knowledge. "We see through a glass darkly," and catch but a glimpse of His ways. The whisper only of a word do we hear, we are crushed before the moth; how then shall we understand the thunder of His power? But when we are called upon to be merciful, it is because our Father "who is in heaven is merciful." If God has done all things for His own glory, we learn that this must be the chief end of our existence, and that our labours, and work, and all the elements of moral excellence are summed up even in this great command, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." We are to worship Him in spirit, because He is a Spirit. "We love Him, because He first loved us." It is a sublime truth that there is sufficient resemblance between God and our

poor hearts, that even in our fallen condition, there is enough of the Divine image left upon us for us to hear this heavenly voice, and to know that it has a triumphant message even for us. We are not so smitten by our fall but that these words appeal to our conscience and are verified by our experience. Poor children of the dust, dwelling in houses of clay, we can and may be conformed to the image of God. It is possible for us to yield ourselves unto God, because He is God, and we are made in His likeness. We can fall in with His purposes, anticipate His decrees, and prophesy His merciful dealings by the power of our faith and our conformity with His will. It is not presumptuous that we who are rebels, slaves, and traitors, should speak of being reconciled to God; should expect to be saved from all sin, and taught to delight ourselves in God, and to trust, and rest, and hope in Him. The incarnation of the Son of God is a grand declaration of the fact, that man is like God, and that God is conversable with man. Once, a human being, One not at all times distinguishable from other human beings, was able to bear undisturbed and uncrushed the weight of a divine character, the consciousness of an infinite power, holiness, and love. The sins and sorrows of mankind overwhelmed Him, but the responsibility of bearing on His shoulders all the government of God, and sustaining in His life all the honour of so great a profession, did not oppress Him, or seem an impossible task. When He took the

cup of trembling and agony into His hand, He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." But when He said, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son," Jesus rejoiced in spirit. So complete was the relation sustained by His humanity to God, that He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Thus the incarnation is the great warrant for the appeal made from the nature of God to the duty of man.

Further, the sacrifice and atonement of Christ afford a striking indication of the validity of the argument of the text. Christ's sacrifice is a wonderful display of the holiness of God, for it demonstrates God's grief over sin, God's wrath against sin, God's hatred and condemnation of sin; while it is, at the same time, the most tender and rousing appeal that has ever been made to man's conscience, to be holy, to sympathise in that grief, to share that hatred, to accept that condemnation, and to hope in the mercy of God. Christ's incarnation proclaims the possibility of man's 'being like God, and becoming holy, because God is holy. Christ's atonement gives proof of the holiness of God, and affords the highest inducement for man to "follow holiness."

III. All the essential perfections of God, even those in which we cannot resemble Him, add force to this appeal. The words may be paraphrased thus, "Be ye holy, for He who is *Omnipotent* is holy." He who called you into existence, who is completely above your power, your opposition, or your rebellion; He who

has all the resources of nature and of mind at His disposal, is holy. He cannot look upon sin; He has resolved to bring His Omnipotence to bear upon its extermination, for He is holy, and it is He who says to you, "Be ye holy."

Again, He who is *Omniscient* is holy. He who knows all the recesses of your heart, all the excuses to which you resort, all the palliations that you can make for yourself, all your thoughts, passions, fears and joys, is holy. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Again, He who is everywhere-present is holy. Wherever you go you meet Him. If you ascend up into heaven, He is there; if you make your bed in hell, behold, He is there. If you take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall His hand lead you, and His right hand shall hold you. He who is the witness of your secret worship and public deeds, your inward struggle and your daily business, says, "Be ye holy, for I, who am *Omnipresent*, am holy."

Once more, He who is *merciful* is holy; therefore, "Be ye holy." However ample is the provision which He has made for sinners, however complete the promise of mercy to the vilest and most down-trodden of our race, He is not tampering with law, or conscience, or His holy word. "There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared." His mercy is a manifestation of holiness; it is not a random

or an arbitrary affluence of pity for our misery, but it is the transfiguration of holy law into heavenly love; so that from nature and from Calvary, as well as from Sinai, is heard the voice which says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

SERMON X.

ABOUT THE FATHER'S BUSINESS.

LUKE II. 49.

And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?

SILENCE is often more expressive than speech. The restraint which a great teacher imposes upon himself is frequently as instructive as the words that he utters. The genius of a great artist is seen quite as much in what he conceals, as in what he depicts. The wisdom of an historian is perhaps more conspicuous in the choice of facts over which he draws the veil, than in the events that he thinks it needful to record. We may learn, in like manner, from the utter silence which Divine revelation preserves upon many subjects that seem of great and curious interest, almost as much as from the gracious disclosures that are made to us in its wonderful pages.

If we had been consulted by God as to what we should have liked to know on special Divine authority, we should doubtless have given a great many

different answers. Some of us would have desired a little more history, and others a little more science. Some might have been curious to learn the reasons and upshot of certain events which are shrouded in impenetrable secrecy: others would have demanded more circumstantial evidence than has been afforded with reference to great miracles, or to the divine commission of God-sent men. Some would have asked for more detailed information about another world, and others would have been better satisfied if more definite statements or prophecies had been given about the destiny of this. However, the great Revealer has not consulted us on this matter, but has told us simply what was most instructive and most necessary for us to know. The more we ponder what God has said and what He has not said, His speech and His silence, the hiding and the unveiling of His face, so much the more shall we be surprised with His goodness, and amazed at the "depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

It is very remarkable that such a profound silence should reign in God's revelation over the youth and early manhood of Jesus. Our Lord must have passed through all the stages of life from infancy to boyhood,—from the ardour of youth to the breadth of His manhood,—from the little talk of a child to the mighty words of a great prophet; and yet the curtain is hardly lifted, and the veil is scarcely withdrawn. Jesus was working in a carpenter's shop in a small Galilean village, quite as much shut out from

the rest of the world as some of the hamlets of Northumberland are now hidden from London, Birmingham, or Paris. So quiet had His youth been that He was unknown by name or face to the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Cana, a spot, moreover, where He or His mother had some intimate acquaintances. The Man who in three years afterwards produced by His teaching, His miracles, and His death such a tremendous effect on mankind, that the old world has been reeling ever since with the blow which He dealt on its prejudices and the sweep that He made of its philosophies and its idols; the wonderful Being whose words are to this day binding up broken hearts, opening doors into heaven for poor wanderers in every clime, shaking the thrones of the earth, throwing down the gates of brass, and overturning the institutions of centuries; the Being who is destined to be the universal Saviour and Teacher, as He will prove to be the absolute Lord and Judge of the human race, —spent thirty years of His mysterious life in absolute, unbroken, self-contained, unobserved, awful secrecy. It is true that some three or four hundred years after His death and departure from our world, the imagination of His friends and His enemies dressed up a long array of fables about His earliest infancy; but if any one wants to be convinced of the inspiration of the four Gospels, he cannot do better than read in some of those foolish, feeble, vamped-up stories, the mighty contrast between the

products of Divine inspiration and these cobwebs of human fancy. He will then see the real effect which the mythical tendencies of the human mind can produce when handling the mystery of the life of Jesus, and be able to compare it with the genuine narrative of the life of Incarnate God. But the singular circumstance of the silence of the narratives is a powerful argument in favour of the Divine, the Omnipotent energy that must have accompanied those three years of the active, devoted, sacrificial life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In saying that there is an unbroken secrecy maintained, I purposely overstep the actual circumstances of the case, that you may the more deeply appreciate the force of that one exception to which your attention is now called. It has been beautifully said there is "a solitary floweret to be gathered out of the enclosed garden of thirty years, plucked, too, when the swollen bud is just bursting into flower." There is a point of light, a gilded mountain summit, just coming for a moment into view amid these heavy banks of clouds, hinting to our imagination whole regions of beauty and true sublimity, and assuring us of the continuity of a life that began and ended in God—of that life which, in its birth and death, lost itself, to our vision, in the infinity of the Father's love.

We do not wonder that these first recorded words of Jesus appeared at the time incomprehensible to His mother. There is much in them that the Chris-

tian Church has not yet fathomed. He uttered them on this wise :—The parents of Jesus had been accustomed to go year by year, from their little village home in Nazareth, to the Passover feast in Jerusalem. When the child Jesus, who was mysteriously obedient and submissive to His parents, had reached the age of twelve years, they took Him with them for the first time to that memorable feast, to that celebrated temple, with the intention that He might become a “son of the Law.” It is probable that the Jews confounded all their temple history together, and associated with the gorgeous pile which Herod had reared on Mount Moriah the various thrilling scenes in their national history which had been enacted on its site. The parents of Jesus would doubtless speak of all that their child would see when He entered the sacred city. On their way thither they would pass in view of Ebal and Gerizim, of Shechem and Jacob’s Well; and they might at length enter into Jerusalem by the very gate through which, twenty-one years later, at another feast of the Passover, the Son of God would be dragged forth to die. It is probable that a week was passed in the city, amid the services and excitements of the Passover. Doubtless Joseph and His mother took Jesus to see the sepulchre of David and the tower of Antonia; to visit the Pool of Bethesda, the palaces and synagogues of the holy city, the tombs of the old kings, and the Mount of Olives. The crowd would be very great. The narrow streets would be

thronged with visitors. Camels and their drivers, water-carriers and relic-vendors, men dressed in many strange costumes, much that was gay, ugly, gorgeous, and curious, sublime and ridiculous, would be jostled together in the thoroughfares. Fresh parties of pilgrims would be constantly arriving, with their groups of asses and camels, and companies of people in long procession. These would sing as they entered the gates,—“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord; our feet stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.” Jesus would gaze upon the priests with their linen ephod, and the Pharisees with their broad phylacteries; upon the poor lepers without the gate, and the blind sitting by the wayside begging; upon the captains of the temple, and perhaps upon the Roman soldiers, as they forced some poor criminal to bear His cross along the narrow street which led to Golgotha.

The Holy Spirit has not told us what Jesus said or thought of all the memorable sights which He must have seen. The pilgrims from Athens or Corinth, from Alexandria or Babylon, little thought that the child Jesus was the Messiah for whom they were praying, or that His was that holy life of which all their services were but an imperfect type. The great attraction for Jesus was the temple, and the worship of God. It was in His Father's house that He found out most clearly who He Himself was, and for what purpose God had sent Him into the world. There the Lamb of God was looking on the Paschal

lambs that were killed in the court of the temple. He must have seen His mother and Joseph eat the bitter herbs, and heard them sing in the Passover liturgy, "The stone which the builders refused has become the head of the corner;" "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar." We can almost fancy that He would say to His father, "Behold the altar, the wood, the fire, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

At length the feast, with all its excitement and associations, was over; the little company prepare for their homeward journey. "But the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and His mother knew not of it." So confident did they feel that He would not grieve them, that He was in all probability among their most intimate friends, that "they went a day's journey," and sought Him amongst these. The "day's journey" was of no great length. Like the pilgrims in the East at the present day, Joseph and Mary would not commence their travel until afternoon, and would then encamp for the first night within sight of the walls of Jerusalem.

A modern Eastern city in the crowd of a religious festival explains how Joseph and Mary might spend a day in fruitless search. They might easily have spent a whole day in that mass of buildings called the temple, which combined not only the features of a sanctuary, but those of a fortress, a market, a palace, a monastery, a hospital, a school, and an exchange, for it contained all these things, more or less, within

its vast enclosure. Doubtless they often paced its marble corridors and spacious courts, weeping, and questioning in vain the passers-by. A great effort of modern art has recently enabled all Englishmen to comprehend the scene which Joseph and Mary witnessed when they found their child. Through the eyes of the artist we may see what they did not see, all the forms of ancient Judaism, all its gravest and saddest and noblest representatives face to face with Him who had come so suddenly and unexpectedly to His temple. In the midst of the doctors of the law the quick eye of His mother first found the child Jesus. He had been asking questions which puzzled the venerable scribes; one doctor after another had been confounded, or amazed at His "understanding and answers." There may have been among them some Simeons who "were waiting for the consolation of Israel," who knew well the story of Samuel and David, of Josiah and Joash, who were not ignorant of the Holy Ghost, and who believed in messages from God, even through the lips of babes and sucklings.

When a little child treads on the verge of unseen things, and in its simplicity is "moving about in worlds unrealized," it asks questions of wonderful originality—questions which human wisdom cannot answer. Some of you have been fairly puzzled by the questions of your own children, and, in confusion, have told them not to trouble you with such queries. If so, you can imagine what questions must have

been asked by Him, who, as He grew in years and in intelligence, found out for Himself and all the world that though He was the brother of all men, He was the Son of God. Already He was beginning to say to Israel, "I AM HE!" He might have taught all those learned doctors what they knew not, but He did not yet know that He could; and He continued to question them in a way that convinced Himself that He had come from the bosom of the Father, to declare Him. When His parents expressed surprise, and said almost with reproof, yet asking for His explanation, "Why hast Thou dealt thus with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing?" He gave them this deep and exhaustless answer, which Mary's heart took long to ponder. It contained the first words of "the Word of God," as they have been registered by the Spirit of all truth. All the words of Jesus are of moment to us; but words which imply so much and teach so much are a rich inheritance. "How is it that ye sought Me? Was it *sorrowing* too? Had you not confidence in Me? Could you not divine where I was, or in what I was engaged?" He was or had become so absorbed in the great discovery that He had made, so convinced of His Father's glory, that He supposed they *must* sympathise in and entirely understand His holy enthusiasm. "Wist ye not that I must be"—that there was a necessity that I should be—"about My Father's business?" "My Father!" He, at twelve years of age, has found the glorious secret out!

Henceforward He always calls God His Father, and proceeds to expound the bond of union between earth and heaven established in Him. The whole of the education of Jesus is crowded into these few words of His. Eighteen years of ominous, instructive silence pass away, of which this is the only hint, and they tell us how utterly unique, how entirely unparalleled, how infinitely above all ordinary laws of human thought, the Holy One has been.

These words were the text and motto of His life, and we feel that we are not wrong in considering that this solitary point of glory that gleams out of the clouds that settle on His early life really gives the key to the understanding of it all. It was not merely the utterance of the child Jesus, but it was the central truth of that wonderful life of His, reaching backwards to His miraculous conception, reaching onwards to His sacrificial death.

I shall ask a few simple questions, which these words suggest.

(1) 'Do you want to be like Christ?' Every man who has any nobleness in him, any sensitiveness of conscience, any feeling of God, any hope or joy or rest in God, any conviction of sin, any aspirations after eternity, says, 'I wish to be like Christ.' He is the great central Man; the ideal Man of all men; the One Man whom it is possible, desirable, infinitely important that all men should try to imitate. We are told that we are to have "the same mind that was also in Him." He set

us "an example that we should follow His steps." Without the aid of His work and Spirit, nothing seems more difficult or visionary; but that work and Spirit inspire in all His real disciples the restless desire and the real ability to become like Him. By this it is not meant that we should try to do precisely the same things that He did; that we should itinerate the country, preach the same message, venture to work miracles, attempt to introduce into England what was peculiar to Palestine, or presume on possessing what was specially characteristic of the only-begotten Son of God. By making this mistake some men have failed to perceive the real points of imitation, and lost sight of the essential principle of resemblance to Him. On the other hand, the thoughts, feelings, principles, and spirit that Christ displayed are the eternal rules of right thinking, feeling, and acting which God has given to us; and if we can gather from the revealed words of Jesus what He would have thought, or what He would have done if He had been placed in our circumstances, if we can find out His opinion or judgment on any course of conduct that is suggested to us, if we can apply the principles which He gave us to our daily life, if we can drink thus into His Spirit and do His will, we shall, in the highest sense, become like Him.

Jesus, the Holy One, entered upon every stage of human life, hallowing and dignifying it as He passed through it. Jesus was a *babe*. Even the

helpless baby in its mother's arms may now fill the mother's heart with a new joy, when she thinks that the eternal Son of God was once a little, fragile, undeveloped problem, given to a human mother for *her* solution. Jesus was once a little *boy*, that the youngest child may know as soon as it learns to know anything about Him, that the Christ was not merely a great man, very wise, very holy, very powerful, but was once a boy, with boyish hopes, and fears, and aspirations. We are expressly told that everybody was fond of Him; He was therefore cheerful, happy, obedient, and loving. We are convinced that He never did an unkind, a cruel, an impure, or untrue thing. He revered His earthly parents, and was full of adoration, and faith, and love towards God. But the Lord Jesus was a *man* who went about doing good; who succoured the unhappy, took notice of the outcast, sacrificed Himself to the welfare of others, was gentle, humble, and earnest. He always said what He meant, and meant what He said. The word of God was His constant meditation; the will of God His perpetual work; the service of God His daily sustenance. Nothing impure could exist in His presence. He poured the light of eternal law over all the inner recesses of the heart. The favour of princes could not make Him swerve from His mission; His popularity with the multitude could not induce Him to flatter their vices; the danger of death could not silence Him when there was a sinner to save, a Pharisee to rebuke, a Sad-

ducee to confound, a devil to cast out. He forgave every injury that was done to Him, and bore with awful meekness the miseries of misunderstanding, desertion, denial, betrayal, of a mock trial, and of a cruel death. "He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself;" and for the joy of redeeming man from sin, of exhausting the curse of transgression, of bringing in everlasting righteousness, "He endured the cross, despising the shame." "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." In much of His special work it is impossible to imitate Him. We cannot atone for human sin; we cannot confer upon others a righteousness that we can never earn. Still we may have fellowship with the sufferings of Jesus, and be made conformable to His death. We may sympathize in His agony, drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. Our hearts may bleed over sin, and bear the cross after Him: we may "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach;" we may suffer in the flesh, be crucified to the world, and be buried with Him by baptism into His death; and we may take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him. We may accept, further, the great things that He laid down about life and eternity, about man and God, about salvation and holiness, as eternal *truths*. Thus we may have His thoughts and His spirit, and reflect to some extent the genius of His wonderful and beautiful life. Indeed, all life that is beautiful, in the patriot, in the hero, in the

philanthropist, in the humble unknown Christian, all quiet endurance of wrong, all patient continuance in well-doing, all intense sincerity, all deep devotion, all self-sacrifice, are beautiful and admirable, because they recal to our minds the spirit and the life of Him who was the perfect man, the Being in whom God and man are no longer two, but one.

Jesus died and rose again from the dead that He might confer His own Spirit upon us, and create within us this new, this divine, this eternal life. Are there any of you, my brethren, who are not smitten with the love of goodness, or with any desire after resemblance to Christ; who would rather live selfish lives, and do as you list; who love sin, and who prefer the pleasures of sin to soaring thus above yourselves into the fellowship of God? Are there others of you who have no notion of quietly bearing an injury; who have no love to God, and no notion of submitting yourselves to His providence? "Like Christ!" It is the last thing such desire, the last thing they pray for. I do not know what to think of, or say to you. But I know this, that you each wear a nature that is capable of great things. Yes, the poor wretched drunkard, the gambler, the cruel father, the self-willed, obstinate, godless man, and the frivolous, heartless woman too, wear a nature that Jesus has dignified. I will not, dare not, despair of any; no, not of the most desperate fool, the most degraded, miserable man alive. There is hope of him as long as he is a man, and has not become utterly

a devil; for Christ lived for him, and Christ died for him.

But, on the other hand, many of you *do* long to become like Christ. You yearn to think and feel, and work and suffer, to live and die like the Son of God. You feel rightly, that if you can but do that you attain the highest kind of life. Let me then ask,

(2) 'Have you found out that God is your Father?' The first great discovery that Jesus made, and one which clearly penetrated His whole life, was this, that God was His own Father. It was the Divine declaration which dignified His baptism; it was the burden of the Sermon on the Mount; it is the basis of that all-comprehending prayer in which He taught us to say, "Our Father." He did not renounce His trust in the Father when He hung upon the cross, and the last words He uttered were, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit!" "The business of the Father" was His first word, "the promise of the Father" was His last word on earth. It is in Him that we know that God is our Father. It is through Him that we see that, though we have broken the laws of our Creator, we can be gathered into the paternal arms, and forgiven our iniquity; that, in forsaking our sins, we may, by faith in Him, find mercy; that God loves us, cares for us, will not forsake us; that God is more than a Creator, a moral governor or a judge, infinitely more than the complex of natural laws—that He is our Father. It is in Him we see that we shall be treated not as

outcasts, not as dust and ashes, not as creatures, subjects merely, but as *children*.

If we had come to the knowledge of the strange fact, that in this assembly there were three or four men who were living in poverty and slaving for their daily bread, but who were really the children of a King—the heirs of great provinces and boundless wealth; if we had only to find them out, and shew them the title-deeds of their inheritance to convince them of this their unknown dignity; if here were the parchments and promises which would prove all this beyond the possibility of question,—what an excitement it would be easy to produce among you,—how eager you would be to know upon whom these few perishable honours and possessions were about to fall! But here are the title-deeds of a nobler inheritance—the assurances of a grander relationship. Here are the promises of the living God; the proclamation of the King's Son, written in His own life-blood, that He is not “ashamed to call you brethren.” I have to announce to you, by God's ordinance of preaching, that you are the offspring of God, the brethren of Jesus. If you will not believe in the pardon of your sins, in the relationship which He has recovered for you, you must suffer the consequences of this wilful ignorance, you must continue outcasts from His family. If those fancied heirs to a kingdom refused to believe in their own title-deeds, they might die on a dunghill. My brethren, if you will not believe the Fatherhood of God in Christ, you

are condemned already to the second death. Without Christ you can do nothing; you are left to the god of the philosophers, to cold laws, to the miserable creations of priestcraft, superstition, and guilty conscience. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not in the only-begotten Son of God."

Some of you say, 'God cannot be my Father, or He would not leave me so poor in the midst of His countless riches, I should not have to slave in the midst of my Father's house.' What! are you resolved to ignore all His mercies; to yield to the tyranny of the senses; to forget all that He has actually done to persuade you of His regard? Has He not sent you message after message, mercy and trial, warning and rebuke, all with this as its burden? Has He not sent His Eternal Son, this well-beloved of heaven, who went through all the humiliation of life, and all the agony of death, to prove to you that He is your brother? God may not, Christ did not estimate poverty and trial, affliction and sordid care, neither "the thorn in the flesh," nor even the walls of a prison or workhouse, as the signs of His displeasure. He has more poor children than rich ones. He gives to peacocks, and humming-birds, and serpents beautiful dresses; and He gives to the little insect of a day an idle life. But He often clothes His noblest children with rags, and confers upon the peers of His creation the dignity of the hardest toil. The noble army of Christ's martyrs came out of great

tribulation, and His own imperial robe is a vesture dipped in blood. Oh, my brethren, set yourselves to work to find out in Christ this grand, this sublime fact! Think about it a great deal; pore over it; pray over it; consider it to be true. Take it for granted, and try to act and to live upon its truth. There is no higher, no truer, no more comprehensive, no more lasting truth than this, which Jesus taught us in His first words—that we too might say, “Our Father, which art in heaven.”

(3) And, in the third place, as some of you have learned this lesson, and have found out that God is your Father, let me press you with this inquiry, *Are you, as Christ was, “about your Father’s business?”*

Some may be disposed to say, ‘Here you make a great demand upon us; our hands are very full; we have a great deal of business of our own to get through; let us do one thing at a time. Let us first finish our own affairs, and then, when time and opportunity occur, we will begin to do God’s.’ ‘Let me wait,’ says one man, ‘till I am settled in life; I mean to be religious by and by. Let me wait until I have scraped a little money together, or till I have seen a little of the world, and then I will attend to the work of God.’ Oh, my brethren, if you cannot mix God’s business with your own, and do both at one and the same time, one of two things is clear—either you do not understand God’s business, or you are mismanaging your own! It may be that your business, your daily work, is not

a righteous one; that it is not one that you can conscientiously pursue. There may be falsehood or impurity mingled with it, or demanded by it. If so, you are quite right; you must bring it to an end. If your business is immoral, or seems to you to demand prevarication, mendacity, impurity, self-indulgence, irreligious compliance, or trifling with conscience, you cannot devote yourself to any Divine worship with honesty, or to any religious work without hypocrisy.

On the other hand, your notion of God's business may be something altogether unpractical and sentimental. Perhaps you fancy that it will make a great demand upon your time, and diminish your means of securing a livelihood. Well, then, if you should be under such a mistake, gather from these first words of Jesus some hint of what it really is.

It is impossible to understand this narrative without seeing that the Father's business involved the praise and worship of God. A tree cannot worship God; the heavens only declare His glory when they are understood and appreciated by His intelligent creatures: but you have the power of perceiving the Father's glory, and of adoring it. Until minds like yours were admitted into the world, God had not perfected praise. Even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He could do this more effectually than out of the glory of sun and stars. This kind of business consists in humble, earnest thoughts; in the habitual feeling of the heart towards God; in

the resolute desire to thank Him, and own, as from Him, the blessings of His hand. That man's business must be a bad business, and the life of that man must be a rotten life, who cannot ever be praising God.

Again, Jesus clearly considered that the temple and house of God were the strongest attractions for one who knew that God was his Father. He was amazed that His parents should have had to seek Him; they might have taken for granted that the place where prayer, praise, and sacrifice were made, would have resistless fascination for Him. Verily, if the place of public amusement or scientific instruction, if the University, the ball-room, or the warehouse, if the band of music, the shop, or the dance, have greater attractions for you than the house of prayer, then it is clear that you cannot yet know the unspeakable majesty, the infinite power of this great heavenly Father of yours. The whole spirit and mission of the Lord Jesus prove to us that He felt the very essence of the Father's business to be, in His case, a patient, continuous obedience to the Father's will. As God gave Him a work to do, and called upon Him to finish it, He has also given you a work to do; and when you are yielding to the claims of conscience, when you are toiling honestly for your daily bread, when you are denying self for the good of others, when you are trying to soothe a broken heart, when you are doing the commonest earthly work in a right and reverent spirit, you,

too, may feel that you are about your Father's business.

But, in conclusion, let me ask one more question.

(4) 'Do you feel that you *must* be about your Father's business?' Jesus felt a holy, a glorious compulsion upon Him to work the works of the Father, to do the will of God, to promote the glory of God. His strongest wish was to do it. It was impossible for Him not to do it. May we not believe it true of you, that your Father's business, that His praise, His glory, is indeed your business! Oh, that your hearts were so full of jubilant gratitude that you could not hold your peace! My brethren, if this work is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well; and if Christ is anything to you, He must be everything to you. I beseech you, then, when the world tempts you to yield to its seductions, have the answer of Jesus ready. If your old companions sneer at your new-found happiness, tell them there is abundant cause for your joy. If they do not understand the strength of your new attachment, tell them of the discovery that you have made; tell them that you have seen on the great hard face of universal things a smile gleam forth; that the leaden sky rains down new thoughts and mercies on you; that the universe seems to you to be a new home, a real dwelling-place of God. If you have to lie on the bed of suffering, and the devil tells you to curse God and die, resist him! Suffer on in patience, saying, even there, "I can be about my Father's business." If death stares

you in the face, learn to see in him but an angel of light, a messenger of mercy, a herald from the Father's house, calling you in higher fashion and nobler guise to be about your Father's business.

In that temple-palace of God, where all the spirits of just men made perfect are gathering, where the Lamb of God is in the midst of the throne, may we all be welcomed as to our own home, to the rest and joy of our immortal spirits! Then, when earth from afar beholds us there, and hell wonders that it has lost its prize,—even while we echo the everlasting song, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him that sitteth on the throne, be all honour and glory for ever,”—we shall only be saying in other words, “Wist ye not, oh earth, oh hell, that we **MUST** be about our Father's business!”

SERMON XI.

THE WITHERED HAND.

MARK III. 1.

And He entered again into the synagogue ; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

HITHERTO the phases of the Divine life which have come under our review have had respect to the direct conscious relations of the soul with God. There are, however, manifestations of the new and higher life which are more decidedly subjective and experimental in their character, the analysis of which is more obviously made from the stand-point of human consciousness. There are forms and also defects of the Christian life, which may come under our inspection and criticism, and one of these is suggested by the text.

All the miracles of our Lord had a double meaning ; they were proofs that He was gifted with Divine power, and was therefore a Divine Messenger, a divinely-commissioned Saviour ; and they were also representations of the great work which He came

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There was a synagogue in Galilee, in which a large number of the Pharisees were accustomed to congregate for God's worship; where they might often be found fashioning some deep-laid scheme of ambition, or determining such regulations for their own conduct and united action, as should ensure them the largest amount of influence among the people. But what were they to do now? The young Prophet from Nazareth set their entire power at defiance. He uttered great principles which cut at the root of their pretensions; He dared to interpret Scripture without their assistance; He boldly confronted their hoary traditions with an "I say unto you," which made them tremble as they stood before Him. "The people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Jesus had boldly impugned the Pharisaic doctrine of the Sabbath, and their indignation knew no bounds. It was manifested on this wise. They had reason to suppose that He would come into this particular synagogue on the Sabbath morning; and with the hope of obtaining a more definite charge of Sabbath-breaking against the Lord of the Sabbath, they brought with them a man who had "a withered hand;" they placed him in a prominent position that he might attract the notice of Jesus, and there they sat, waiting to see what He would do. Surely, the formalism, and narrow-mindedness, and prejudice of these Pharisees were not inaptly represented in the withered hand of their accomplice, as he stood there

waiting for the observation of Jesus, and ready to become the occasion of an accusation against the Son of God. The symbolic teaching of the circumstances that followed I shall endeavour incidentally to establish, as I proceed to describe,—

I. THE MEANING OF THE WITHERED HAND. The disease was not like the palsy, a type of universal helplessness and inaction; it did not imprint on the countenance the expression of utter misery and weakness; it was not like some consuming fever, a type of the way in which sin and vice pervert all the faculties of the soul; there was not the fumbling of blindness, nor the raving of the madman; but there was a vivid picture of that infirmity—whatever it may be—which destroys a man's power of doing anything well in this world of ours. There was a man there who had "a withered hand."

The hand of a man is one of those noble physical features which distinguish him from the brute. "The hand" is but another name for human skill, power, and usefulness, and for the studied adaptation of means to ends. By his hand, as the servant of his intellect and his heart, man is put on a physical level with, if not far above, all other living beings, in respect of his power to defend himself against the formidable creatures who are furnished by nature with ponderous and deadly weapons, both of attack and resistance. By the aid of this wonderful instrument, he can cover his nakedness, he can build for himself a home, and make the whole world do his

bidding; he can subdue it unto himself, and fill it with the trophies of his mastery. The houses, the roads, the bridges, the fleets, the palaces, the temples, the pyramids, of earth, have all been wrought by the little hands of men. The agriculture and industry by which the whole habitable face of our globe has been fashioned into "the great bright useful thing it is," have been the work of man's hand. While the working-man's hand is his sole capital, the hand of man is constantly used as the symbol of power and the type of developed and practical wisdom. The hand commits thought to paper, and imagination to marble and to canvass. Literature, science, and art are as dependent on its service, as are the toils of the labourer, or the fabric of the artizan. If manual toil is economized by machinery, still man's hand is essential for the construction of the machine, and for its subsequent control, so that the hand is the symbol and the instrument of all the arts of human life. We can, therefore, scarcely refrain from the thought that that "withered hand" in the synagogue was a type of uselessness and feebleness; and that "right hand," as St. Luke describes it, robbed of its nourishment, hanging helplessly in a sling, was a picture of whatever deprives a man of the power of holy work, and renders him an incumbrance, if not a mischief, in God's great kingdom. Following the idea thus suggested, I shall proceed to refer to some of those peculiarities of character which virtually wither up man's power of holy service.

(1) The *bigotry* of these Pharisees rendered them useless in the great kingdom of God, and destroyed their power of serving Christ. They were so self-satisfied that they could not brook reproof, so persuaded that they were right, and that everybody else must be wrong, that when He who was "the Truth" came within their reach, they were strangely incapacitated for appreciating Him, and they eagerly plotted how they might lay hold on Christ and put Him to death. They would not, or could not see, that the kind of work which our Lord performed on the Sabbath-day was such as most fitly and fully brought out the true meaning and spirit of that holy day; they did not comprehend that working with God was the surest and most real mode of "entering into His rest." Jesus did not keep the Sabbath in *their* way, and that was enough for their malice. They desired to see a miracle, not for the purpose of entering into its mighty meaning and teaching, but that they might find some accusation against the Holy One. They were conscious of the power to advance the cause of Jesus among their nation, but unless He would work according to their notions, they were prepared to organize against Him that deadly hate which was at last consummated on Calvary. That man with "a withered hand" was an apt picture of the way in which their bigotry had incapacitated them for any high or holy service. Bigotry is not quite hunted out of the world to this day. It ties up men's hands still, so that they cannot

sympathize with those who differ from them, nor feel pleasure in one another's success, nor bid each other 'God speed.' Bigotry arrests holy co-operation and interferes with all kinds of good work. It prevents cordial confidence, aggravates the minor differences, and conceals the deep unity, of battling creeds. If indeed we are so utterly satisfied with our own opinions that we think nobody can be honest who presumes to differ from us; if we can only work in the narrow circle of our sect and party; if we have no notion of doing an unselfish thing, and are never known to sacrifice our own preferences or those of our party for some object that is incomparably greater than either of these, our hand is withered;—some disease has sapped our power of serving God, or loving our neighbour. Perhaps there are many such men in our synagogues now, whose position we may thus learn to estimate. While we do so, however, let it be observed that bigotry and intolerance are by no means confined to the men who profess any one class of ecclesiastical or doctrinal opinions. It often happens, that the *less* a man believes, the more firmly and blindly he cleaves to that little, and so much the more bigoted he is towards those who cannot consent to dispense with all that he thinks fit to reject. There is abundance of bigotry in the hearts of those who are loud in denouncing it, and many a man goes about the world with his right hand tied up in some bandage of narrow-mindedness, charging everybody else with the very sin of which he is himself most guilty.

(2) *Prejudices* wither up some of the energies of men. By prejudices I mean opinions taken up without sufficient reasons, and maintained with obstinacy; opinions that rest on feelings rather than on facts; strong judgments that are the results of whims and personal peculiarities, and that are not the conclusions of a healthy understanding. Those who are the victims of prejudice often ignorantly boast of their weakness as though they considered it a sign of peculiar vigour. Prejudice is an infirmity which not unfrequently is gloried in, and lauded as a virtue; it is an element of character by which some men really rejoice to be recognized, both in the world and the Church; and it is often assigned as a pretext for indolence, isolation, or pride. It cannot be denied that some bigots and some men of strong prejudices have achieved great and good things in this world; but in such cases, their success has been secured in spite of their prejudices. Bunyan with his wonted felicity represents prejudice as blind and deaf;—blind to all truth, and deaf to all reason. It is Prejudice that the great Dreamer describes as having put fifty deaf men to keep Barget in the city of Mansoul. Everybody knows that as well might one reason with the wind, as hope to argue down the prejudice of a strong-willed obstinate person. If prejudice ended simply in unreasoning opposition to certain truths, it might be left to itself to live or die as it list, but prejudice is always lamed for holy action, and hampered in doing God service. Multitudes may be seen

standing idle all the day long, in consequence of the conspicuous and utter impracticability of their character. There are many men—and professing Christians, too—who are so full of obstinate prejudices that they invariably find fault with every good work that has to be done, and with every possible way of doing it; but who very seldom do any worthy thing themselves. Their hand is withered.

(3) *Past inconsistencies* often wither up the power of service. It is a mournful truth that if a man has once forfeited his character for honour, integrity, purity, or even for Christian prudence and wisdom, he may have repented of his great transgression, he may have gone to “the fountain that is opened for all sin and uncleanness,” and there he may have washed his stain away; but still his power for service is crippled. He cannot freely and happily engage in Christian work; he skulks into secrecy and retirement; he feels paralyzed and helpless when he tries to speak for God, to warn a brother from sin, or to urge upon him the duty of repentance and a godly life. It is a lamentable truth, for it shews how sin leaves its deep traces on the life, it proves that though our follies may be forgiven us, and the worst consequences of our sins be averted, there are some results that can never be blotted out. Every Christian congregation contains many whose right hands seem hopelessly withered by their own bitter remembrances; they go softly all their days and are among the most unhappy of mortal men.

(4) *Easily-besetting sins* will paralyze the usefulness of any man who does not with earnestness, faith, and prayer, wage ceaseless war against them. Every one has his own peculiar besetment. That which is a fiery temptation to one man presents no allurements to another. There is little use in warning any one against the sin which does *not* beset him, or against the vice to which he has no secret inclination. But alas! we all feel a strong repugnance fairly to examine those evil tendencies of our nature which most easily beset us. It is easy to indulge a virtuous indignation against a sin which is loathsome in our sight, but it is a harder task to deal honestly with that which approaches us, dressed in the garb of expediency, recommended by some specious advantages, consecrated by long usage, and defended by many plausible excuses. It is comparatively easy to watch against those crushing, damaging sins, which scathe the moral nature, and if indulged may carry us away as with a flood, but it is harder work to be ever on our guard against the silent, secret sins of the heart, which if not conquered and expelled, may not less surely eat out our inner life, and exhaust our spiritual strength. Let a man yield himself indolently to the sway of an evil habit, let him give way to idle talk, let him relinquish his mind to the power of vain thoughts; and whatever he may profess, or appear, he will soon find that his hand is withered, that his profession is null, that his power of serving God is gone.

There are some forms of easily-besetting sin which have their evil nature covered over by the soul-destroying name of "little sins," but which often utterly exhaust the power of holy service. *Indolence*, for instance, is one of the many forms of self-indulgence which do not deform and blacken the character, nor altogether deprive it of the respect of fellow-man; yet it is ever ready to substitute self-gratification in the place of self-denial; it is always furnished with plausible excuses for refusing to do a generous or painstaking thing. The indolent man throws upon his state of health, his lack of strength, his age, his circumstances, his responsibilities, the entire blame of his uselessness, and it never seems to occur to him, that Christ commands him to conquer these obstacles, to renounce the devil and all his works, to "take up his cross daily and follow Him." "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Again, the *fear of man* is another of these silent withering influences which restrain usefulness and quench our zeal. The love of human approbation, support and success, has destroyed the moral life, has murdered the souls of many. There are men who would be restrained from the commission of a crime by the presence of a little child, but who are not withheld from it by the knowledge that the eye of God is as a flame of fire, searching out all secret sins,

and that He will reward every man according to his deeds. So, there are a great multitude who abstain from doing wise and generous deeds lest they should offend some powerful neighbour; who make loud professions of love to Christ where such professions can bring reputation of sanctity, or even influence ~~with the world, but~~ who are ashamed of Him in the presence of the blustering unbeliever; who can even, like Peter, go with Jesus into the garden, and then at the twitting of an idle girl deny that they know Him; who from the fear of losing the smile of some wealthy patron, jeopardize their immortal souls, slink away from holy service and relapse into worldly indifference, amid the sneer and the chuckle of the devil and all his angels. *Ungoverned temper* is, by some strange confusion of thought, classed among "little sins." There never was a greater mistake. Surely, a fit of drunkenness is less hateful than a sour angry temper, in His judgment who has taught us, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, is a murderer in his heart. Many exclude themselves for years from Christian work, out of petty spite and foolish vanity. Verily, these have their right hand withered by an easily-besetting sin. We must not omit all mention of some of those secret sins which are the unexpressed causes, the unacknowledged explanations, of the silence and inactivity of many of those who persistently abstain from the co-operation in the divine work and holy enterprize of the Church of God. A base habit, a smothered lust, a concealed

fraud, or an un-Christian mode of transacting business, is often the true explanation of the obstinate aloofness and indolence of many professed members of Christ's Church. They hear the demand of the Master for clean hands and a pure heart; they possess neither, and so they dread to encounter the accusation of conscience which would inevitably accompany all Christian effort. Verily, we who look on the great evil that covers the earth; who know the great God who is in heaven, and the great Saviour who has come to knit this poor wicked world into fellowship with heaven and Himself; we who know that He has power to exhaust its curse, to sweep away its evils, to explode the mine of destruction, to cast Death and Hell into the lake of fire, and to regenerate by His Spirit and redeem by His blood all who believe in Him;—surely we must burn to join in this great work. If, then, we are convinced that bigotry and prejudice, inconsistencies and sins, that the faults of the understanding, the heart and the life, will—amid all the other mischief that they may do—obstruct our usefulness, paralyze our energies, or mar our success, we shall be disposed to ponder with attention the record here given of—

II. THE HEALING OF THE WITHERED HAND. Christ came into this world not merely to set man free from the bondage of sin, but to emancipate all his faculties for holy service, to strengthen all his powers, to summon him to work while it is day. Detecting at once the surmises and queries which were at work

in the minds of those around Him in that Galilean synagogue, He said to the man that had the withered hand, "Stand forth in the midst;" and then turned round on His accusers with the inquiry, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day, or to do evil? to save life or to kill?" Thus He suggested the truth that not to do good is to do evil, not to save life if we have the power to do so, is to kill. The positive sin of omitting to do good had never before crossed the minds of these Pharisees. And who is there that has duly felt the responsibility of the evil that he might have checked, the misery he might have removed, the tears he might have dried, the souls he might have saved? Yet if this is true, if *not* to do God's work be equivalent to doing the devil's work, the question that our blessed Lord asked was one which these Pharisees could not answer; and "they held their peace." Christ continued, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it *is* lawful TO DO WELL on the Sabbath-day."

They met this appeal of Jesus with sullen silence; "and He looked around upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" then without waiting longer for their sanction, He cried in words that are preserved by three Evangelists, "Stretch forth thine hand;" and immediately that hand which had no power in itself, which no human

skill could heal, felt at once that a Divine energy was given to it. Divine strength was perfected in its weakness, and it was "made whole" even as the other.

There are three lessons of practical value which we may learn from this narrative.

(1) We may gather Christ's willingness to heal us. He is ever seeking us; His eye is always scanning our necessity; He knows our imperfections and shortcomings, as no other can do; and He is able and willing to remove all that hampers and impedes the freedom of our spiritual life. He does not restrict His love and grace to the saving of notorious sinners, to the snatching of firebrands from the burning; for wherever He sees any of sin's work, wherever the heart and life of man are crushed and injured by the fall, there the pitying eye of Jesus rests. He singles out the humble publican, the blind beggar, the impotent man, the outcast leper, and the palsied cripple, and gives to each the strength and the healing that he needs. Surely He is ever present to heal, and now He is looking on every one of us, who having ever been injured and paralyzed by sin, may feel ourselves wholly unable to do the thing which reason and conscience call on us to do. He summons all who feel that their spiritual hand is withered, to stand forth and receive His blessing.

(2) We may learn the way in which we are to make use of Divine strength. It is obvious that nothing less than Divine strength could help this

man to stretch out "a withered hand." His power was null; he might as well be told to fly, as to do what seemed so impossible. Was not that the thing that he could not do, and had not done for years? The muscle was wasted, the nerve inactive, the will was powerless to do that thing. However, if the man had reasoned thus, his hand would have hung useless by his side until his dying day; but when he willed to stretch it forth, God willed *in* him; the communication of Divine strength was granted to him at the very moment when he determined to obey the command of Christ. Having made the long-suspended effort, he felt the power of God throbbing in his arm, and the supernatural change was wrought. Now this is just a type of what takes place whenever a sinner tries to seize and appropriate God's promises or God's strength. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" and the unconverted sinner says, 'That is of all things the hardest for me to do. If it told me to do some great thing, to observe some ceremonial, I would comply, but how can I with this palsied will lay hold on eternal life? How can I with this worldly mind accept a spiritual boon, with these entangling habits run boldly and freely the race set before me, with this sensual, sin-stricken spirit, put my faith in a great unseen and spiritual reality?' In one sense, such reasoning is just; we cannot do the right thing in our own strength, but if we *will*, we *may* make the Divine strength our own; we may feel rushing,

thrilling through our whole being, the God-given energy, which He promises who says, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" It may seem to us that reason, faith and love—those human powers by which we appreciate our duty and our claims—are our own faculties; but we shall find within them, the Divine power, and wisdom, and love. It may seem that we are called upon to think, to feel, to do impossibilities, but Infinite help is at hand, and if we set about doing them, it is no longer we, but Christ who dwelleth in us. Verily while we "*work out salvation with fear and trembling,*" God is working "*within us both to will and do of His good pleasure.*"

(3) Here is the great rule by which at all times, through the help of God's grace, we may overcome our listlessness and uselessness in His service. It is by our own vigorous effort to overcome the withering up of our faculties that we shall test the worth of Divine promises. We must resolutely determine that we will no longer go about in the kingdom of God like men with withered hands, destitute of the power to serve God or glorify Christ. The effort that we make to conquer the depressing circumstances under which we are labouring will set us free from many of them. Let us stretch forth our hands, let us try to serve our Master; and let us work while it is day, for the night cometh. There is work to be done in our own hearts, work in our homes, and among our families, which we may begin this day. There is

work in the neighbourhood where we dwell; there is sickness to soothe, and misery to relieve, and sin to rebuke, and there are "ragged homes" to mend, and there is work to do in this great wicked world. "The field is the world," and alas! "the labourers are few." Let us stretch forth these hands,—withered by pride or prejudice, by inconsistency or fear, by evil tempers or secret sins,—and let us at God's bidding exert the strength that He gives us, seek out the work that He would have us to do, and taking the Divine help for granted, let us attempt the otherwise impossible task, beat up the stream which threatens to carry us away, expect the supernatural aid, and anticipate the Divine result. Let us make the effort, let us grasp the sword, or the plough, or the pen, or the hand of our brother, and whatsoever God has given us to do, let us do it with our might. Doubts may harass us, fears may hamper and paralyze our service, the great mystery of life and death may seem too terrible to bear. But we shall best conquer the doubt, and the fear, and the mystery, by the active obedience which obeys the command of the Divine Saviour. If our hands are set to holy work, then as they labour they will not only be healed, but they will be also filled with blessings. Thus will they best learn to strike the golden harps and clasp the hands of angels!

SERMON XII.

THE OPENED EYE.

MATT. IX. 28.

*And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him :
and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this ?
They said unto Him, Yea, Lord.*

THE power, the glory, the virtues, and the rewards of faith, form the theme of this chapter. Faith is represented as the hand wherewith man takes hold of God, and as the measure of spiritual blessing ; and it is also set forth as the reason and medium of Divine love to others. Indeed, faith is the keynote of the melodies of this chapter ; and from these harmonious variations of illustrative fact we learn much concerning its nature, and much that we may immediately apply to the solace and healing of our own souls. We may gather as much instruction on the nature of faith and salvation from the miracles of our Blessed Lord as from the more dogmatic utterances of the New Testament, or of the Church. In this chapter we see how an imperfect and trembling faith, which would cherish itself in secret, and shrink away in the crowd, which can only dare to touch the

hem of the Redeemer's garment, is yet rewarded by merciful healing, and ultimately by Divine love and friendship. Beautifully the lesson is here given of the power of the hem of His garment, whensoever either in the form of type or ceremonial, of dogma, or tradition, or "unconscious prophecy," poor sin-plagued humanity has approached the Lord and Giver of Life. The shrinking from an open avowal of love and gratitude, through shame and ignorance, may have dwindled the dimensions of the gift of the Divine Saviour, but millions have surely been made whole of their plague, without their conscious recognition of the loving Hand that has done this great thing for them. We see in this chapter how the bold yet simple faith of two blind men in the power and grace of the Son of David, is the occasion of one of those great symbolic acts of power by which our Lord was accustomed to flash on human minds the truth that He was "the Light of the world."

Again, we learn in this context that the faith of friends in Christ's power to forgive sins, and restore to health the palsied frame of one who was unable to utter his own prayer or express his own faith, was the occasion of the display of Christ's great love to that poor paralytic; and even at the risk of His own honour, popularity, and life, He healed him.

The faith of Jairus was still more startling. He said to Jesus, "My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live." When the people said to him, "Trouble not the

Master; thy daughter is dead," thus shewing that they had no idea of Christ's higher powers, and thought that they had found a limit to His grace, He replied—"Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole;" then, when to encourage the faith even of the minstrels and hired mourners, He said, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," and "they laughed Him to scorn," He waived them all aside, and taking only those who did understand something of His love and power, He snatched the little one from the grasp of death. How wondrous a thing was this miracle! It was one of those solemn oaths of defiance cast in the face of death, whereby our Master vowed that He would be the destroyer of death, and the conqueror of the grave.

These miracles, however, though they set forth the great value and mighty importance of faith, also exclude the idea that our personal faith must always precede the Divine love. The Gospel narrative shews us that the faith of a mother in her Saviour's power to quicken a dead son from the corruption of the grave, may be rewarded by a display of His supernatural grace. We are not wrong in concluding that the faith of ministers and friends which avails to break through many obstacles, and by determined persevering labour contrives to bring some sin-palsied soul into the presence of Christ, is often rewarded by the healing of that soul. Again, we learn the blessed lesson that those who can see, may bring the blind to "the Light of the world," and exercise a faith,

and practise an intercession which are big with blessing. Thus, on five different occasions, we are told that our Lord listened to the prayers and entreaties of others, and vouchsafed His Divine gifts. The beautiful record of the blessing which He pronounced on little children, when mothers brought them to Him that He might touch them, is rich with suggestion, and speaks volumes of hope to the parents who in faith now place their children in the way of His spiritual blessing, and are hopeful and content if in holy baptism they may but lay them once within the region of His life-giving smile.

The narratives of the Gospels do however furnish us with another class of interesting and suggestive facts, in which our Divine Lord is represented as healing the blind, the diseased, and the death-stricken, and even raising the dead, without any intervening faith, or other condition on the part of the recipient of His bounty; and therefore, out of the pure royalty of His love.

One of these instances is remarkable and detailed, and forms a strong contrast to the subject which is now before us. I refer to the cure wrought upon the man who was born blind, as recorded in the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel. This fact of his connate blindness created a position and circumstances which from the very first seemed to have put the sufferer at sore disadvantage. Prejudice, Oriental philosophy, Pharisaical expositions of Providence, led even Christ's disciples to inquire, "Did this man sin, or his

parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus, in reply, declared that his calamity arose from no special sin in either case, but that love, infinite love, was underlying this dark mystery. "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents," was the Saviour's answer, "but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." What wonders of meaning lie in that language of our Lord! Our deep afflictions are many of them but the disguise of special love, the preparation for an "exceeding weight of glory." It may seem strange, and almost unfeeling, yet I believe we should often not be wrong, when heavy trials befall ourselves or others, were we to exclaim, 'How greatly must these sufferers be loved!' for "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." Sorrow is oftentimes the wound through which the heavenly balm finds entrance to the soul. God's dearest children, His beloved sons, are men of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Now in this instance the miracle was wrought on a blind man when he was ignorant of Christ. It was a miracle of love and healing which made him first acquainted with the power and grace of an unknown friend. He bore persecution out of the love he cherished to this unseen Deliverer. It was not until after the miracle had taken place, and much controversy had prevailed about its reality, that "He believed on the Name of the Son of God," or even knew who He was, that he "might believe on Him."

These narratives, then, teach us that sometimes

faith precedes salvation, and that sometimes salvation, healing, and the opening of the blind eye are bestowed without any conditions, and in fact precede faith. It was true in the days of our Lord, and has been true ever since. We have abundant illustration of the principle that "salvation is of faith, that it might be by grace;" but not less plainly are we also taught the deeper truth that "we love Him, because He first loved us;" and thus there is enough to deter us from idolizing our faith, or substituting our faith for the Christ, or from speaking of what God and Christ can or cannot do, and thus limiting the Holy One of Israel. It is often true that faith is the measure of our blessing, that with a weak faith we are only favoured with a small blessing, that with a one-sided faith we are only enriched by a one-sided blessing, and that with an imperfect and trembling faith we can but steal away a partial blessing, and that "without faith it is impossible to please God;" at the same time we know that God works all things after the counsel of His own will, and that "He is found of those who seek Him not." Some are arrested in the midst of their hostility, others are healed when they did not ask for healing, fed when they were not famishing, raised even from the grave when no faith, no emotion of love, no longing after life had disturbed the dull cold heart of death.

The same remarks are peculiarly appropriate when we are dealing with the higher as well as the lower forms of truth,—with the later as well as the earlier

phases of the Divine life. We must expect different results from the infinitely diversified conditions of the soul of man, and the infinite fulness of the grace of God. At times the recovery of sight and strength, and the quickening of our paralyzed or suspended energies, clearly follow the exercise of our faith and the acts of our confession; there are other miracles of healing, concerning which all the account which the saved man can give is this, "He hath loved me with an everlasting, sublime, mysterious love; He hath loved me, not I Him!" "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

I make these cautionary remarks because I am about to speak of the special force, the peculiar blessedness, and the great power, of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not, when we are bending in reverence over this one portion of the revelation of God, imagine that we are dealing with the whole of it, but let us prophesy according to the analogy of faith.

(1) The faith described in my text was the first outgrowth and expression of a deep and lively sense of wretchedness and darkness. It is a great discovery that we make when we see that we are in a horrible pit, that we are tottering on the verge of a fearful precipice; when we feel that we are famishing, hunger-bitten, poor and naked; that we are corrupt and blind, palsied, feverish, and unclean; but such feelings as these must not be confounded with faith. Faith often springs out of such convictions,

but faith is a great deal more than these. There are many souls who never find out their blindness, who persist in saying 'We see,' who really imagine that the glimmer of light that finds its way through their sealed eyelids is all the light that is possible. There are even in this nineteenth century, men—and Christian men too—who are not conscious of ignorance, who do not feel any particular burden on their spirit, who are not perplexed by any mysteries, who scorn the idea of man, enlightened, civilized, Christian man, calling himself

" An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light."

They call it "sentimental stuff," and are not at all disposed, even with Goethe, to die crying for "more light." It is not wonderful that the cry of the unregenerate should very rarely be for light. When, however, we do hear this great, this exceeding bitter cry going up from a broken heart, we are, I think, justified in supposing that it is a divinely-inspired cry, a God-revealed discovery, the sign of a Divine work in the soul.

Faith, however, is more than this cry. It amounts to a conviction that light is possible, that light is probable, that light is approaching, that the great light of heaven is at hand. Faith trusts, not merely groans; it indeed gives up groaning and bemoaning itself, and by that simple fact its darkness is lighted up with hope. We admit that a sense of wretchedness, and guilt, and sin, is auxiliary to faith, is

often a necessary preliminary to faith; but, my brethren, never let it be confounded by you with faith. Hunger may be a sign of life and of the true preparation for food, but it is not bread. Naaman bemoaned his leprosy, but he was not cleansed until he had washed seven times in the Jordan. The two blind men knew that they were blind, and they cried out for help; but their appeal to Jesus indicated on their part much more than a discovery of their darkness, and we notice,—

(2) The faith in this instance was an intelligent faith. These men had not been merely encouraged to hope for mercy from a notorious prophet and worker of miracles, but they had settled it in their minds that Jesus of Nazareth was the "Son of David," "the Christ" of their nation, the long-expected One, "the Messenger of the Covenant," "the Holy One of Israel," "the Light of the World." They at least believed that He had come "to open blind eyes." They very possibly had heard His great sermon on the Mount, His promise of comfort to the mourners, and of the kingdom of Heaven to the poor in spirit. Their faith had conceived the grandeur of His mission. "Son of David" was not simply a name that had been given to Him, but the corresponding office was a reality which they knew must bring healing with it, and hence they cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." We very reasonably conclude that all faith is an intelligent appreciation of some unseen reality.

It is not merely an emotion ; it is a conviction of the understanding. To the true believer ' Jesus ' is not a mystical name by which our sin and ignorance can be charmed away ; ' Christ ' is not merely a word which by some magical process can heal our diseases ; but the word of Christ must and does awaken certain thoughts, must convey Divine truths to the minds and understandings of men. A faith that will overcome the world must *know* that Jesus is the Son of God. A faith that is to " lay hold on eternal life " must know the " truth as it is in Jesus," the reality that there is in Christ ; must be persuaded of His power and grace, of His justice and mercy.

Real faith is to be distinguished from all mere recitation of His titles, from any conjuring, so to speak, with His name, or from any senseless repetition of His characteristic excellencies without the hope or expectation of understanding them. Faith is not the blind and implicit credence that is enjoined by superstition, while on the other hand it must be distinguished from the philosophic assent which first tries to make a Christ, and then to believe in Him ; which first develops a Christ out of the depths of its moral consciousness, in strange forgetfulness of the great objective facts of Divine revelation, and presumes rather to criticize the Christ of the Gospels than to believe upon Him.

(3) This faith of the blind men was eager and importunate. They cried first by the wayside, " Have mercy on us, thou Son of David." For

awhile the Lord chose to delay attention to their request, obviously seeking to put their sincerity to the proof, to test it by their power to wait for the blessing. The ominous sound, "Son of David," must have been discordant, and hateful, as it rang in the ears of the Pharisees; yet Jesus did not hush that cry, or refuse the honour with which the blind men tried to cover Him. They followed Him to His resting-place, they groped their way through the crowd, ever and anon crying, "Have mercy on us, thou Son of David!" until at length they forced themselves into His Presence. Does not this suggest to us that true faith is characterized by strong feeling as much as by intelligent conviction of the divine in Christ's nature? The soul intent on finding Him must press into His Presence, must toil after Him, must be determined to wrestle with the unseen Angel of the Covenant, and to exclaim with firm resolve, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me!"

The strong emotion of which I speak must not be extinguished or crushed by having to wait for mercy. That faith is neither strong, nor eager, which is disposed to rebel against what seems like God's delay. How long has God waited for us! How long have we neglected His mercy! Let us never be surprised, if our Saviour should choose to test our confidence in Himself by pausing ere He sets us free from our bondage to sin, or before He opens our eyes on glory, or says to our ruffled agitated souls "Peace; be still."

We must moreover be prepared to follow Jesus whithersoever He may lead us in this search after Him. It may be easy to do this when He goes before us into some of the green pastures of His love, or into the home of domestic peace and joy, but if He call us away to the mountain-top of silent unobserved prayer, if He beckon us into the house of mourning, if He pass on before us into the wilderness of temptation, and sore doubt and harassing; or if we can only reach Him by following Him to the lonely cell, or the lonelier unsympathising crowd of men, aye even to Gethsemane and to Calvary, to the bed of death, or to the palace of His glory and light on the other side of that dark cloud of sorrow; still we must follow Him if our faith is real, and strong, and if our hold upon Him would be such as to secure His great salvation.

(4) The faith of these individuals was a personal experience. This remark may seem to be but a truism, but the self-examination to which our Saviour subjected these eager blind men suggests the observation. He said to them "Believe ye?" are ye sure that it is not a superficial impression produced upon you by other people's eagerness and praise? "Believe ye?" Occasionally I have met with persons in some such state of mind as this. They believe that certain truths are to be believed, or that certain facts are credited by other people, or that a series of promises have been uttered which are of unspeakable moment to other people; but they seem

never to have taken the promises of God into their own hearts, never for themselves to have laid hold upon them. 'We know,' say they, 'that these things are true;' 'we believe that other people believe in the truth of them'—but if the question is put, "Believe ye?" they are at once baffled, and reply 'we do not know.' Dear brethren, belief in somebody else's faith, belief in the faith of your parents, or your pastor, is not faith in Christ. It is better than utter indifference; it is better than hard impenitence, it is better than bold presumption; but—it is not faith in Christ.

Great temptations prevail in these times to shift the responsibility of faith upon the Church, or its representatives, or on the literary organs in which we generally trust, or on the cleverer men than ourselves who are able to answer the difficulties which to us seem insoluble. 'There are those,' it is said, 'who know all the difficulties that our candid friend points out to us, they believe heartily and fully, and therefore *we* may.' This state of mind is better than utter carelessness or avowed unbelief, but it is an altogether unsatisfactory reply to the searching question, "Believe ye?"

(5) The faith here referred to appreciated Christ's power to save. "Believe ye," said the Lord, "that I am able?" Faith in mere power does not seem to advance very far in the realization of Christ's Messiahship and glory. It is a very elementary conviction, though so firmly held and so eagerly

expressed. Yet, my brethren, such a faith penetrates to the heart, and involves the essence of true faith. If we cannot lay hold on the power of Christ, and feel that "He is able to save to the uttermost," that "He has power on earth to forgive sins," that "All power in Heaven and Earth is given unto Him," it is useless to pray, and it is mockery to trust. If we allow lingering suspicions to remain in our mind about the atonement that He has made for us, the completeness of His righteousness, the supremacy of His power, the extent of His dominion, the Omnipotence of His love, our faith degenerates into an experiment, a risk, a mere suspension of judgment. It is no longer faith, but only a qualified desire; it is not the trust of the heart, but a dubious venture of the understanding.

There can be no appropriate feeling towards Christ unless we have conquered our scepticism and hesitation, until we have at least explained to our own minds the apparent delay of mercy by some other consideration than His incapacity to help us. Christ knows that when we deeply believe in His power, we never hesitate about His willingness. Still what could these men have meant by their exceeding earnest cry for His grace if they had any doubt about His power? Does not your own experience help you to understand that question? Have you not sometimes gone to Him with a feeling of desperation, saying, 'If I perish, I will perish at His feet. I will risk myself on Him, and throw the responsibility upon His word.

I will test His promise, and if it prove a delusion I can be no worse off than I am now. If He cannot save me there is no other who can?' But Christ says, 'Do not approach Me with suggestions of My impotence.' 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth:' "Believe ye *that I am able* to do this?"

(6) Lastly, the faith here mentioned appropriates and applies the Divine power to its own case. "Believe ye that I am able *to do this?*" "Believe ye that I am able, not merely to raise the dead, to cleanse the leper, to cast out the devil, but to open your eyes? in other words, to do for you that which you want? to appease this strong desire of your nature, and prove myself to be your Christ?"

The opening of the blind eye was an act which prophecy had referred to Christ, and it is a peculiar feature of His work which He has never ceased to exhibit. One principal cause of our wretched condition by nature is the imperfection of our spiritual vision. Sensuality blinds us to spiritual realities. The mists, clouds, smoke, and dust of this busy world, conceal from our view the great realities of God's spiritual universe. We are not "alive unto God." His works are great, but we do not seek them out; we take little pleasure in them; often we do not see them. Even when we have some perception of these things, our vision is oblique and confused. "We see men as trees walking;" we blunder and stumble and fall. We are led by others; we follow the crowd;

we are influenced by those who say 'We see,' and we try to keep near *them*. Even Christ is obscure and shadowy to our minds; we do not *see* HIM; heaven and hell are remote contingencies that fail to influence us; and perhaps we have a vague dread of both, which does not affect our conduct. We do not even see one another; it is only the dimmest outline that we discern through the gray mist that intervenes. Light and vision seem to be the great things that we need; our "eye is evil, and our whole body is full of darkness." But faith, which is intelligent, earnest, personal, and appreciates Divine power, believes that He who is "the Light of the world" is able to *do this*, to "turn the shadow of death into the morning" to reveal Himself to us, so that He is no longer a mere VOICE, a mighty WORD, but a Person whom we may trust, a Priest who will intercede for us, a King who will rule over us in righteousness, and whom we shall see in His glory as He is. Such faith believes that He is able to reveal, to uncover God to us;—for "no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and He to whom the Son shall reveal Him,"—to purge away the scales from our eyes, to pierce the gloom of our old nature, and enable us to gaze on all things in something like a true proportion. He is able to DO THIS, to reveal heaven and hell, the dangers on our journey, the pitfalls at our side, the glory that awaits us. This faith is that which Christ demands from all blind men. God help us to say and feel that Christ is "able to do this;" to give us all the light we need, to

reveal God, man, life, death, sin, hell, heaven, and eternity to us in such fashion that our souls may be satisfied and may be at rest ! Are not multitudes walking in the light which He has shed on them ? Why should not we walk in the light with Him and them ? If the light that beams from Him be darkness, then welcome darkness ! Then there is no such thing as light. " Lord, we believe ; help Thou our unbelief ! " As we tell Thee this even now, great Light of the world, put Thy hands on us, touch our eyes and we shall see, and we will " follow Thee in the way." Yes, my brethren, " Be it unto you according to your faith." Oh the mighty force of faith in Divine power ! Imagine these words stealing like a sunbeam into every family circle, into every Church of the living God, into all the assemblies of God's people : conceive them as falling on the lonely spirit of the missionary of the cross as he gazes on the valley of dry bones, as cheering the spirit of every worker, lightening the burden of every sufferer, and as speaking of infinite consolation to every agonized, tempted, dying man,— " Be it unto you according to your faith." What a revolution would pass over human affairs ! How would the New Jerusalem descend at once from heaven ! the new heaven and the new earth be revealed, and the mystery of God be finished ! Why is it not so ? " Lord, increase our faith," that we may see Thee ! and follow Thee, and have daily experience of Thy power, and all Thy glories and virtues until we see Thee as Thou art, and enjoy Thy Presence for ever !

SERMON XIII.

THE MEANING AND MEMORIES OF SUNDAY.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 1.

The first day of the week.

THE observance of the first day of the week in England is a notorious and interesting fact. By this I mean that the English Sunday is a thing talked of, inquired into, philosophized about, from one end of the world to another. One day out of seven we witness a strange phenomenon, a sudden cessation of ninety-nine out of a hundred of the businesses of ordinary life. The great thoroughfares of the busiest city in the world are comparatively forsaken for some hours of that day; the miles of shops are shuttered, and dark, and silent as midnight; the rattle of ten thousand mills is hushed. Great orders may have arrived, but they lie idle in the post-bag or the desk. Even the railways and the post-office are compelled to yield, in some measure, to the general pause. Justice does not summon her courts; Equity, Exchequer, and Chancery must wait

till to-morrow. The most exciting political question cannot prevail on the parliament of England to continue its functions; and even the hungry creditor must be content until the sacred day has passed, before he can claim payment of his bill or serve his writ. It is true that certain trades are practised on this day, and that much inconsistency and inconvenience arise in connection with this singular arrangement; but there it is, a startling, conspicuous fact in this nineteenth century of grace: the exceptions to it prove the rule, and the parties who are excepted, reasonably groan under their burden, and feel that a wrong is inflicted upon them. Whatever may be the deep reasons for this sabbatic interruption of all ordinary business, the economic result on the grand scale is, that every hard-working man obtains an additional day's wage. If the Sunday were abolished, he and his masters might work the seven days through, and receive no higher remuneration than before. The practical result is, that the working life of every sober man is prolonged, his ability for service increased, his wits sharpened, and his health promoted by the period of relaxation and rest. So thoroughly is this understood, that those who look merely on the material aspects of the question do not hesitate to regard the Sunday as every Englishman's boon, and as a conventional right of such value and importance, that it must not be trifled with. Almost all are ready to allow that we owe so much of our manly independence, of our reflective common sense,

of our self-education, of our vigorous life, to the action and influences of the Sunday,—that it would be a treason, a folly incalculable, to destroy so venerable a custom.

Yes, verily, to say nothing of conscience, of God's law, or of Christ's love, it would be an unspeakable madness, and a great and wicked injustice to rob the Englishman of his day of rest. There is at least one day in seven, when the roar of the tidal swell of human toil is hushed; when man is not the creature of others, nor their slave; when his time cannot be claimed by another, when his free-will has freer scope, when he may remember, and does reflect who and what he is, and what he was sent into this world to accomplish. There is one day in the week, when the unseen and the everlasting can at least come from their hiding-places, and draw aside the veils which otherwise hang so heavy and dusky over their awful countenances; and when the voices of truth, and righteousness, and solace, can be poured into deafened, but not unwilling ears. To rob you of your Sunday, would rob you of what is most valuable and essential to your physical, intellectual, moral, and religious life.

Now the observance of the first day of the week is the birth of a deep religious principle. It arose out of no mere customs of society, no mere love of idleness, no economical purpose, no deep understanding of the intellectual and physical benefits it would confer. It was not an arbitrary arrangement of our

rulers, nor any study of physiology which conferred this rest upon us. The legislature may do much now in preserving it for us, that is, by letting it alone, but the legislature did not create it. The law of it lies much deeper down in our nature than our puritan, or catholic, or heathen ancestors;—the inspiration of it is not the clock of St. Stephen's, nor the wisdom of Downing-street. It has arisen out of a deep conviction of Divine authority, a strong persuasion of godly men, a profound faith in unseen realities, a love of God and of man, and the hope of everlasting life.

Religion has been the basis, the mother, the nurse of the English day of rest. It has sprung out of deep convictions of the sacredness of life, the holiness of law, the certainty of judgment, and the prospect of heaven. We owe much of its present form to the earnest reverence for God's revelation, the strong religious convictions, the intense love of freedom, and the vigour of spiritual life which characterized those who were bent on reforming the Church in England. We hold it now as a portion of a glorious inheritance which has been bequeathed to us. It savours of earnest days and harassed nights, of Smithfield fires and Oxford martyrdoms, of pilgrim fathers and bloody assizes, of days and of men, that, in spite of every mistake and every reverse, are acknowledged by all to have given deep roots to our national greatness, and both flowers and fruitage to its spreading branches.

The English Sunday will not be preserved without the continued operation of this religious principle. The love of money will be stronger than the love of rest. Competition can wage successful battles with anything short of conscience; God knows that it often avails to conquer this. But religious convictions are stronger, more widely spread, more deeply penetrating than any notions of conventional right, than any laws of a shallow expediency. If you try, if the nation tries, if a few noisy talkers try, to found the sanctity of the sabbath on the advantages of recreation,—rational or irrational,—there will be very soon an end of its sacredness altogether. Let Sunday become the day on which ordinary travelling for recreation takes place,—and it will occupy tens of thousands of hands, who will find that day, as many do on the continent of Europe, the hardest and most laborious of the seven. Let recreation and amusement be the main reasons upon which you ask for the preservation of this day of rest, and you will have it invaded at every point. Let us be distinctly forewarned, that if the great use of a Sunday is a holiday; if we have no deeper reason than the relaxation of our physical energies; no other attraction than that which music, or fresh air, or public amusement, may afford; we are destroying the great safeguard of the day, we are running in danger of being robbed altogether of a sacred and invaluable right. To reduce our English Sunday to the level of a continental or pleasure-taking Sunday, would be to

deprive the people of England of their birthright, to hand labour, more than ever, over into the power of capital, and to open the door along which all kinds of toil must, as in other countries, infallibly follow. England would be tenfold worse off than any Roman Catholic country is, under such a calamity. In these countries there is a decided compensation for the loss, inasmuch as there are about twenty -Saints'-days, or other days, that are kept with a sanctity far surpassing that of the continental sabbath, and of which we Englishmen know nothing. There are works of necessity, of charity, of mercy; there are works which are a balance of inconveniences, and which are allowed by conscience as a choice of evils: there are certain persons who are, unfortunately, made to work on Sunday, in consequence of the religious spirit, the desire for worship on the part of others; but this evil has its limits, and is constantly correcting itself. It behoves all Christians to make as little demand as possible upon the persons whom they employ, or whose services they need,—and to remember that this day belongs to each man, woman, and child, for himself, or herself, and that the method in which they employ it is a matter between them and God.

In the name of your own rights, by reason of your own need, out of regard to the obvious necessities of the case, and in view of the experience of all Europe, beware how you trifle with the conscience, the religious spirit, the Christian consecration, the holy safe-

guards, of what, even in spite of yourselves, is blessing you.

But let us attentively consider some of the religious principles which have given and hitherto preserved this holy day to us. Such an inquiry will form a useful matter of self-examination, and will aid us in the holy life.

I. In the first place, "the first day of the week" is a day of mighty memories—memories that we cannot let die! It is the appointed memorial of the most considerable facts in the history of the world. It is the standing register and monument of the influence of those facts upon the wellbeing of mankind. It is a perpetual declaration, on the part of Christian peoples, that they "remember their Creator;" and that they—all things and all beings—are the creatures of God. It is an utterance of the faith that "all souls are His," that all worlds are His; that "the firmament declares His glory," and "the earth is full of His goodness;" that He made us, and not we ourselves. It is, accordingly, a profound confession of dependence, of obligation, of gratitude. This cessation of all other work, this freeing of the mind from other thought, this washing of the hands from worldly care, meant originally, and (wherever it is a religious act) still expresses, a humble desire to enter into the rest of God, to acknowledge His claim and His power, as well as to share in His glorious satisfaction and repose.

Without entering into any of the theological con-

troversies on the moral appointment of the seventh day for these high purposes, or the transference of the sabbatic rest from the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord's-day, I may say that Christianity, in its doctrine and its institutions, in its work and worship, is the heir of all previous dispensations, and has gathered up into itself all the desires of the nations. I may remind you that those requirements which were made on the world's gray fathers at the dawn of time, in the way of worship and sacrifice, and that the sorrows and aspirations, the symbols and the life, the struggles and the sins of Israel, have all been more or less sanctioned or fulfilled in the great work of Christ. Not one jot or tittle has failed from God's law,—all is being fulfilled.

(1) The celebration of the Lord's-day has never lost sight of that prime fact in all revelation and all religion,—namely, the creation of the world and of man, and, consequently, all the claim of God's law upon our conscience, and of God's goodness on our gratitude.

The main, the prime idea of the sabbatic rest is, that man should occasionally lift his eyes from the clods of earth, and gaze upwards into the face of his Creator; that he should awake up to a conviction of that intimate relation that subsists between him and God, and ponder with reverent awe, with freedom of mind, and openness of eye, the link which binds him to the throne of God. It is, that with the most determined effort, man should emerge from

the tyranny of the senses and the crushing cares of the world, and claim his heavenly relationship. This hushing of the power-loom, and closing of the shop, the office, the bank and the theatre, is as a mighty whisper that goes over England and the world, saying, 'We are the creatures of God,—He made us, both body and soul.' The bell-ringing of the Sunday morning, and the various other tokens of the day of rest, are voices of God, saying, 'Oh, ye children of men, forget not that ye are the creatures of My hand, the sheep of My pasture, the subjects of My government, the children of My love.' My brethren, if God means this by it,—if, by the special providences which have preserved for you the Patriarchal sabbath, the Jewish holy-day, the Christians' feast of praise, He does thus lovingly appeal to you every Sunday; then it is strange treatment of God that any of you should be utterly thoughtless about Him throughout its hours. If there is a God, and if we are His creatures, it is a great delusion, an awful folly, to forget and ignore HIM. There are hundreds of millions of our fellow-creatures who have no clear notion of a God, who have deified each other and themselves, and who offer the most willing sacrifice to the most worthless objects. We mourn over and pity them,—we long to rend the veil which hides the awful oneness of creation from their view,—we tremble at their fate. But what is to be said of the millions of Englishmen who say they believe in one holy, living, eternal Creator, the God of all

spirits, the Father of mercies, but who never recognize His claim upon them, never tremble at His word, never try to lisp His praise?

(2) The first day of the week is full of the memories of redemption. Insignificant and rebellious creatures of God, knowing, but not doing His will,—seeing, but not feeling His divinity,—believing, but not obeying His requirements,—exposed to sin, and not avoiding the evil of it,—certain of death, but not prepared for it,—we should have been utterly undone, we should have been without God and without hope in the world, if He, in His incomparable love, had not voluntarily delivered us from the empire of sin, and screened us from the fiercest darts of death. The creation of the world is a baffling and sublime thought,—the redemption of it is still more so. Now the redemption of man from sin and death dates from, and centres round, an event that was enacted upon our earth. He whose heart was charged with the destinies of the world,—He who was the embodied hope of mankind, the incarnate love of God, and the representative of all our need,—He who carried all our sorrows,—was “delivered for our offences,” was “obedient unto death,” and “Himself took our infirmities,” at length “died, and was buried.” Yet if that were all, if the grave of Jesus had been for ever sealed, the hopes of our race would never have emerged from it. But the jubilance of angels over our rescue, and the words “He is not here, but is risen” have been pealing over the ages ever

since the moment when those hours of awful suspense were consummated,—hours during which our world, which had become the grave of the manifested God, had rolled darkly and awfully along its destined way. Yes, “the first day of the week” has been ever since that wondrous morning the glad memorial of the fact that once when sin and death were carrying the hearse of human souls slowly on to the depths of hell they that bare it stood still; that then there was a great earthquake, and the Prince of Life arose in His majesty to quell for ever after all the power of the destroyer. Now, as the first-fruits of them that sleep, He stands by the deserted sepulchre, the accepted Patron and Priest of humanity. “The first day of the week” is a perpetual utterance of the great fact, “that Christ died for our sins, and rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures.” As the light of the Sunday morning steals over the world it awakes in millions of hearts the Divine remembrance that Christ is risen from the dead,—that God has accepted His own sacrifice for sin,—that past sin need no longer be a barrier between us and God,—that, all sinful as we are, we may begin at once to adore His unfathomable love, we may forsake our sins and find mercy. Has the sacrificial death of Christ no interest for you? Has the glorious resurrection of Christ no fascination for you? Have you no sins that need forgiveness? Has death no terrors? In that grim enemy, which lurks and hovers over your home,

which has snatched your wife from your bosom, your children from your grasp, and which will most assuredly, ere long, bring you to the house appointed for all living, can you see nothing but a debt of nature, nothing but a coffin, nothing but welcome rest for your jaded limbs? Is there no need in your heart, no hunger there, no hidden pain, no secret sin from which you know you cannot deliver yourself? Then I tell you, that the first day of every week throughout Christendom is crowded with the mighty memory and grand assurance of *ONE* who can, who will, and who does deliver. It dawns, week after week, with a holy smile; it peals round about you that great thunder-psalm of the universe, "Glory unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;" it pursues you with infinite compassion; it lays you under incalculable obligation. Oh, my brethren, is it to go on pleading with you year after year, and find you, at the end of a life spent in this Christian country, as men who never heard that the gates of death have been unsealed, as those who never knew that sin can be forgiven or condemnation annulled?

(3) "The first day of the week" is the great memorial of the giving of the Holy Spirit of God to man; of that day when the union between God and man was made more certain and real than it had ever been before, when on the day of Pentecost the great proofs were given to assembled thousands that the most stubborn prejudices could be overcome, the

most obdurate hearts softened, the most awful sins pardoned, the most abandoned lives renewed. We are reminded not merely of what God did when He raised His Son from the dead, but of what He did when He sent Him once again to bless us, in turning away every one of us from our iniquities. It reminds us, consequently, that He is still here by His Spirit, constantly making men holy, and bringing sinners to Himself.

The Sunday is the memorial of the beginning of that great work in human nature by which it becomes like Christ, and is made one with God,—the incarnation of the Holy Ghost. Whenever the Lord's-day dawns upon the Christian Church, God seems to say, 'Prepare again, oh My people, for a renewal of My love, for a new vision of My glory, for a new baptism of My Spirit, for the tongue of fire, for the establishment of My covenant with man!' To-day God comes with ten thousand of His holy ones; to-day pride is melted into penitence, hypocrisy tears off his mask, the broken spirit finds mercy, the wicked man forsakes his way, and all God's people shout for joy. If that is the real meaning of the Sunday, have you, my brethren, no interest in these high memories, these unearthly hopes? Are you so contented with the world that you can do without its Ruler and Lord? so satisfied with the past that you crave no pardon? so brave in the view of death that you want no deliverer? so holy that you seek no sanctification? These holy memories are not confined

to any narrow class of thought. They are the memories of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He who despises them must risk a great deal,—must be dispensing with and putting from him his greatest chances for eternity; for, observe, it is equivalent to his saying, ‘It matters very little whether I am a creature of God or not! whether Christ died for me or not! whether I quench, or sin against, the Holy Ghost or not!’ It seems very much like going up to God and saying, ‘O God, I can do without Thee!’ like looking into the sepulchre of Jesus, and saying, ‘I care not whether He rose from the dead or not!’ and like some wild, melancholy, daring blasphemy against that spiritual power and love which can and does make all things new!

II. The Lord’s-day is a day of *noble and happy associations*. It is rich in memories of the past great acts of God, but it comes down burdened with all the brightest and most beautiful thoughts of earth. Great revivals of human fellowship; great, stirring conflicts with evil; the great, the prosperous changes and revolutions of nations,—the deliverance of untold millions from the slavery of sin and the power of death, have all left their impress upon it. It is rich in the fellowship of the past: its holy and blessed reappearance, age after age, unites us with our brethren and sisters in distant generations, who have gloried, as we are trying to do, in the love of God. It is fertile in expedients for bringing into closer fellowship man with man. Is this world so happy, is

your lot so bright, that you can afford to do without the help of your brethren? The Sunday summons you to united praise. Is your heart so jubilant with gratitude that you need no such assistance? The prayers of many bleeding hearts are lifted up in unison to God. Is your power to pray so great that you can afford to do without the stimulus of brotherhood? It offers to you in the ordinance of preaching, by which God has chosen to save them that believe, the gospel of your salvation; it prepares a message for you, "whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear." My brethren, have you, who trifle with these associations, sounded the depths of that gospel? Can you do this thing without wishing for more accurate knowledge, and for deeper feeling? There are millions of Christians who would say, that in the worship, the thoughts, the stimulus, the communion, the holy purpose, the thankfulness, the fellowship of this day, they find their highest enjoyment, their most thorough relaxation from the cares that eat out their heart, and the business which would often stifle the conscience and smother the soul. Verily, if happiness is the satisfaction of augmenting desires, this is the highest kind of bliss; for it is a satisfaction which never cloy, but only quickens the appetite—which appeases, but never sates the soul. Christians would tell you how they had come into the sanctuary of God bewildered and overdone,—their hearts crushed, their visions dashed, their hopes blighted, yet there they found a peace which passeth under-

standing: how as widows and as orphans they had come, and realized the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory: how they came blind, but returned seeing, for the light of God's countenance had penetrated their closed eyelids: how they came paralyzed, with withered hands and spirits of infirmity, and how they returned whole, strong, and vigorous: how they came with some devil of passion, of jealousy, of envy, or lust raging within them, and Christ has cast it out; or how they came full of gratitude, and there have felt that they joined hearts and voices with all the sons of God, and in the relief of uttered praise and heavenly sympathies had days of heaven upon earth.

III. It is a day of *holy anticipations*. Memory is blessed, and such associations as these are full of charm; but what would men do without hope? All beings live upon hope; the child hopes for manhood,—the student for light,—the poor man for competence. Hope lights its torch on the funeral pile of our dead joys. We must ever in the abundance of mercy still stretch out our hands to God. This sacred day is the highest licence and holiest sanction of spiritual hope. It does, indeed, remind us of the sublime and central point in eternity, when the dread and holy Being that inhabits it came out of His place and rebuked darkness and chaos with His word, "Let there be light." We link it on to that first sabbath of His love, when man, made in the image of God, became the High Priest of nature, and

uttered first the voice of intelligent and holy praise. Yes; that was the first sabbath. It takes us back to that day of awful silence when a few solitary stragglers were seen watching the spot where three blood-stained crosses stood, or looking at the Roman guard that sleepily watched the sacred sepulchre. The Jews were eating their unleavened bread, and Pilate had laid his head on his thorny pillow,—the spirit of the disciples was crushed,—Peter was weeping bitterly,—and they all “thought that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel.” “A sword has pierced the heart” of the blessed mother of Christ, and His regal standard lies torn and stained by His grave. Every Sunday takes us back in thought to that dread night, when the last rays of the sun faded from the garden, and all was still; when as yet no thunder had broken on the serried ranks of the powers of darkness, who hastily exulted in their victory:—and that was the last sabbath. It reminds us, too, of the first day of the week, when Mary Magdalene, ere it began to dawn, came to the deserted sepulchre of Jesus, and heard voices saying to her, “He is not here; but is risen as He said;” and that was the first Lord’s-day. It tells us of all the mighty triumphs of the risen Jesus over the prejudices of Jews, and the philosophies of Greeks; over the gods of the Pantheon, and the kingdoms of this world; and it ever reminds us that “He is exalted far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.” But it also carries us on in thought for a thousand years to that

day for which all other days are made, to that time when the millennial earth shall be filled with the saved; when, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead in Christ shall rise; when "the mystery of God shall be finished," when the heavens and earth shall be renewed, when we shall enter into the rest of God, when the Lord's-day and the Sabbath shall be one again, and both shall be eternal. The first day of the week predicts perpetually the sabbath of God's love,—the end of all these conflicts, the infinite blessedness of the righteous,—the harmony and the light, the rapture and the love of heaven.

IV. Memories, associations, and hopes like these confer a dignity and a worth upon this day with which we have no right to trifle, and constitute the Lord's-day a day of *holy duties*. It is the first day of the week, not the last,—the beginning, not the ending,—the day of holy activity, not the day of indolent repose. Let me plead with you from this hour to consider it as a measure of time which is to give a character and lend a meaning to your other days. I know the objections and difficulties of some who say, 'This is all very well for people who have leisure, comforts, and religious dispositions to help them, but we must rest our wearied limbs, and find in mere cessation from ordinary duty our true sabbath.' But is there no rest, no pleasantness, no true relaxation in the service of God? Do we not all want to make a friend of the Most High?

Are we not stewards, to whom the Master has entrusted some special fund that was to be used for Him, and which we have no right to spend upon our own indulgences? Have we forgotten that a reckoning-day is coming, and that God will demand an account of our stewardship? Some of these reasons that sound very plausible now, will be torn to shreds in "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Some man may reply, 'I do not deny this to be very true; but why should I not keep my Sunday at home? God is everywhere, and is not confined to temples made with hands. I can get more good in my own way at my own fireside.' If you do not keep it at home, my brother, it will be to very little purpose that you try to make up for worldly thought and talk by an hour of public worship. But you know the value of combination and fellowship in other things: why should you abstain from the advantages of fellowship in that which needs it most? You know the worth of instruction in the affairs of this world, and are eager to seize information where you can do it readily. Why should you despise the instructions of God's ministers and the sympathies of Christ's Church? "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." "Hallow God's Sabbaths." Be "in the spirit on the Lord's-day." Thus, I am convinced, every day will be happier, every care will be lighter, every friendship will be sweeter; and when the Sundays of this world have melted into the great day of

the Lord, you will find that the Lord's-days of earth were the dawns of that immeasurable light and blessedness which shall neither be darkened, nor eclipsed, nor extinguished for ever and ever.

SERMON XIV.

EVERY-DAY LIFE.

TITUS II. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

It is impossible to estimate too highly the value of strictly religious thought, or the importance of definitely and obviously religious acts. He who feels nothing of a sinner's need, whose heart does not thrill to the assurance of a heavenly and Divine promise, and who never sets himself to realize his own personal relation to the Most High God, cannot be a religious man. He in whom the memories, the associations, the hopes and the duties suggested by "the first day of the week" inspire neither reverence, nor fear, nor joy, nor sacrifice, is "far from the kingdom of heaven." The man whose soul never leaps up when he beholds the manifestation of his God, who is never charged with gratitude, never melted with love to Christ, who recks nothing of the possibility of having God within him, pro-

claims to all the universe that the fangs of the world have gone deep into his heart, and that the poison of sin has congealed the life-blood of his soul. He to whom worship is strange and communion impossible, for whom Sunday seems to provide no spiritual solace, and no symbol of a peace and rest which he needs, declares how disordered and corrupted his nature has become. He spends his labour for that which is not bread. He lays up for himself wrath, and a fearful reckoning in the day of the Lord Jesus. He to whom the Church has no attractions, the Bible no message, and the Sacraments no meaning, can neither hope, nor rest, nor delight, nor believe in the living God.

But, on the other hand, the man whose piety consists altogether and entirely of these religious duties, and feelings, and thoughts; who confines his spiritual exercises to the house of God, to the Sunday, and to the holy communion; to the singing of hymns, or to the hearing of sermons; who limits his religious life by an occasional, stated, or spasmodic attention to any class of sacred observances whatsoever, is quite as far from the kingdom of heaven. It is often as difficult to rouse such a man to a sense of his danger and his mistake, as it is to disturb the cold sleep of one who makes no confession and professes no faith. There are, however, not a few who condemn the wretched compromise they make with God, and who grieve over their inconsistency. Many exclaim, 'If we could only feel

through the week as we have felt on the Lord's-day, if we could preserve in our business the emotions we have had in the hour of prayer, all would be well! We make good resolutions, we imagine that our profession and our trade, our cares and our eager ambition, are all forced into their proper place. We pray, we sing, we weep, and think we gain the victory; but the world's temptations come upon us the next day, and we are as helpless, as stupid, and as worldly as ever. We put off our religion with our Sunday clothes, and never put it on again till the week is out. Do tell us how we are to *be* religious!

Permit me to make two observations on this confession. First, that religion is not a thing which it is possible to put off and put on like a Sunday dress. There are certain organs of your body to which you can allow repose, and if they are out of order you may afford to do without them for a season. But there are other organs which do not cease to move and work, from the first moment to the last moment of your existence. If these are diseased, impaired, or weary, they must work on, all out of order as they are, or you die. You cannot give a week's, a day's, a moment's rest to your heart or your lungs. The same thing may be said of your religion. It should be the very essence of your whole life,—the spring of all your emotions,—the ceaseless source of all your conduct; if it be not this, you have most certainly been confounding something else with it. You can-

not take up and put down, take off and put on, your religion. If you think you are doing so, believe me that as yet it is not a religion, but a web of delusions. Still the desire to be a spiritual man is one of the first stages of the divine life. You could not use the language which I have imagined without much experience of life, without many humbling views of self, without some of the poverty of spirit which Jesus says is blessed; without a class of thought which is, in fact, a revelation of God to your soul. You are finding out that religion is not an occasional emotion; not a ceremonial routine; not a loud profession, but a life. You have learned the ennobling truth, that it is possible to do the most secular thing, to enjoy the most earthly blessing, in a devout spirit, and thus to consecrate it; and you have accepted the humbling revelation, that it is equally possible to engage in the most spiritual enterprise, to read and sing, to pray and praise, with the most ignoble intention, until God's worship is degraded into a trade, a mummary, or a sin. I think it will be well, then, to remind you of a few of those departments of LIFE which are, in fact, the realm of religion, quite as much as the Sunday, the Sacrament, or the Sanctuary.

Let me enumerate a few things that combine to make up what we call our every-day life.

(1) CONVERSATION is a large element of every-day life. The power of speech is one of the grand distinctions of man, and of his life upon the earth. It

is thus he clothes invisible thought with form, and confers upon the subtle intangible reality an immortality of earthly recognition. It is in speech that we most resemble our Almighty Father; for His Eternal Son is His word made flesh, and "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." It is in human speech that love finds her sweetest solace. Sympathy flies on its holy wings from heart to heart. Righteous indignation can with its aid thunder down a wrong, and humble faith by its means can utter all its praises and its hopes. But speech is also the power that man has of divulging his depravity, and spreading the foul contagion of his lusts. There is a holy converse which can consecrate the dark and troubled hours of our earthly life,—which expands the intellect and unfolds the heart; but there is also a kind of conversation whose hoarse whisper and indecent mirth boldly reveal the sheer devil that there is in a man. How much of our conduct, of the actual employment of our time, and how much of our pleasure and of our miseries, of our holiness or of our sins, are virtually included in our daily conversation! Our temper and spirit are expressed in the words we use, in the topics we talk about, and the purpose for which we talk of them: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." A man cannot utter an impure word without leaving a blistering trail over his own soul, to say nothing of the deadly poison that he is breathing forth on all within his reach.

Our daily conversation determines all the tone of our mind; it stamps and it stereotypes our temper. It reveals whether charity and virtue, manly or womanly grace dignify our character; or whether we are frivolous, vain, heartless, and worldly. Who can measure the unkindness that may be crowded into a single word, or the thoughtlessness, the selfishness, the pride, the vanity, the cruelty, the crime, that may be condensed into a syllable?

In our conversation is involved, on the one hand, all "the soft answer that turneth away wrath;" "the excellent oil that will not break the head;" the endurance that will suffer a wrong, rather than commit one; the patience that endures affliction; the heroism that can rebuke a sin. In it is included, on the other hand, the scandal and the slander that have desolated so many homes; that have scattered firebrands in so many circles; all the backbiting and much of the injury that one man can do to another; the lies that divide men's hearts from each other; the falsehood which has crushed the buds of hope; the cowardice which can hide a debt; the meanness that can conceal a flaw; and all the wretched want of brotherhood which leads so many to say, 'Each man for himself, and God for us all.' My brethren, if a man is to be religious at all, his talk, which makes up so much of his life, must be penetrated, illumined, dictated by religious principle. I do not mean, of course, that he must always be talking piously, and have no conversation save that which concerns

salvation, the Bible, and the Church;—but I do say that, just as he has found out the law of God, the love of Christ, and the power and spirit of holiness, he must allow these things to dictate, to repress, to flavour, to purify, or govern all his speech. You cannot truly praise God in the morning and utter threats and frivolities at night; you cannot truly trust your soul to God's faithfulness on the Sunday, and be unfaithful to your neighbour on the Monday; you must not pray for mercy in the Sanctuary, and shew no mercy to your client, your colleague, or your enemy; you must not join in the songs of Zion, and then find zest in the frivolities, the impurities, the unkindnesses, the scandals, the misrepresentations of daily life. My dear brethren, every-day life means every day's talk.

(2) **WISH** is an equally extended department of every-day life. It is in our nature to be conscious of desires after a great many things, and these desires are not in themselves sinful; they are even necessary to the maintenance of life, to the onward progress of mankind, to the subduing and replenishing of the earth which God has lent to us, and in which He has given us a life-interest. These desires of all kinds are the spring of nearly all that we do in this life. Deprive a man of his wishes, let "desire fail," and he soon "goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." Our human existence is one ceaseless, insatiable longing. We are constantly trying to make our own, and in some sense

to gather into ourselves, that which is beyond us. But one man wishes for one set of enjoyments and common mercies, and another man for another. One man slaves for his daily bread alone, and another has all this toil sweetened by the love of home, of wife and child. One man desires the gratification of perverted tastes; another man yearns for the satisfaction of the most exalted aspirations. Our every-day life is made up of wishes—some of them pure, and some degraded. At times they are wise, and often they are vain and foolish. To-day we are craving a new power, to-morrow we are labouring to wipe out an old stain; at one time we are aspiring after heavenly things, at another we are plunging headlong into abysses of folly and shame. In the realm of human desire is included all the empire of motive; all the reasons that we have for doing everything; all the premeditations of sin; all the lusts of the flesh and of the mind; all our temper and spirit; all our disappointments and vexations; the disposition with which we pursue our work; the prayers we offer for heavenly succour; yes, all the God-implanted yearnings by which He prepares us for spiritual blessing. The life of a truly religious man does not involve the extinction of all his human desires, but it does mean the surpassing activity of heavenly desires; the predominance of wishes that are suggested by his new and higher life.

Every-day life means every day's wish. Not the wish which can be felt on one Sunday, and then

forgotten until the next, or which can be felt when we are on our knees, and never felt again till custom once more brings us there; not the muttered interjection, which in a moment of fear or agony will lead us, from our heart, to wish that we were better men; but all the daily, abiding, habitual wishes of our souls. Let us bring them up now, and see what is the revelation they will give us of ourselves;—perhaps we shall find a legion of devils, which must be cast out; a storm of passions, which must be hushed; a brood of revenges, vexations, bad resolves, unbrotherly triumphs, impure hankerings, which must be trampled out of us. Perhaps they are humble, virtuous, charitable, reasonable, modest, chaste, holy desires, fit for a brother or sister of Jesus. A moment's thought will prove that these desires of ours, these genuine intentions, these self-born, or heaven-inspired wishes, are our very SELF; and if we are to be religious men, religion must have sway over these.

(3) WORK is another main element in life. The business of life, the daily toil and drudgery of a man, these help to constitute his every-day life. Not simply what he talks of, or wishes for, but what he actually does in this world. As I have already said, the *spirit* in which a common or utterly secular thing is done, may redeem it from being mean or contemptible. I once knew an old servant of God, who had been working hard all his days, amid much poverty and sickness. I met him one day when he had nearly reached his eightieth year; he was gathering sticks

on the high road. I accosted him in tones of commiseration; but there was a smile on his withered face as he began to talk of his mercies. I shall never forget his tone of voice, nor the light in his eye, as he said, "I have been thinking that, if it were not for this naughty unbelief, we might feel that God's love had made even this world into a paradise." And now I seldom see a man at work on the highway, or overborne, as it would seem to me, by the pressure of life's heavy burden, without remembering that noble utterance; and I know that it is possible for a human being to do the hardest, humblest, even the most distasteful human work, and yet to move along the highways of this dusty, defiled, present evil world, transforming it into a paradise. But there is a great deal of work done, that no Christian, that no religious man, can by any possibility do, which no amount of Christian spirit can by any possibility sanctify. There are ways of doing business, that are the devil's own ways of ruining the souls of men. There are cheatery and systematic dishonesty that nothing can justify; which, as long as they are persisted in, no power can pardon. There is work done in this Christian England for which, so long as it is persevered in, it is mockery to speak of the blood of Christ. There is NO PARDON possible, but a certain, fearful looking for of fiery indignation.

There is work done at which human nature shudders; there is work done, which though not actually criminal, none but the hardest hearts can do,—none

but the coldest souls, the most unbrotherly hands can accomplish. There is a stern justice, and right even, which have no bowels in them. For instance, there is a distress-warrant now on the way to some poor widow. It will quite fill up the measure of her sorrows. She has had a hard week's work, doing her very best; her little fatherless child has been sick of the fever; she has toiled like a slave in some little shop ever since her husband's death, but the heavy rain entered the broken window and spoilt her goods; and trade has been bad, and the rent is due. She does not know it, but all her hopes are hanging on the will of a collector employed by some landlord who rejoices in whole streets of such property as her poor abode. The collector talks about doing his duty; and that work of breaking the widow's heart will be done by him as calmly as if he were treading on a broken egg-shell. Shall not He that fashioned that heart consider it?

Yes, that little word *WORK* contains whole worlds of meaning. There is the work of the statesman and the artist, of the preacher and the poet, the work of the imagination and the reason, and all the incessant toil that ambition and competition dictate. We shall not exhaust it by a brief enumeration. Every-day life includes all the things that are actually done by us, either as duty or necessity, under the inspiration of the lowest as well as the highest motives. It must be possible to bring all this under the empire of religion,—to supply a set of motives that can

dignify the commonest occupation, consecrate the humblest toil, and make "daily drudgery divine;" motives which can explode and deflagrate those wretched purposes and evil desires that have so often issued in violated laws and broken hearts; and motives which will hallow and purify all our service, and every talent.

(4) But there is another large department of every-day life to which it is necessary to refer,—I mean **RECREATION**. That which is recreation to one man would be a complete penance to another; that which some of you think a most enjoyable relaxation is to others an intolerable weariness. Some mode of spending the leisure hour is necessary to every man; and perhaps nothing more surely indicates his temper and spirit than the method in which he finds it most agreeable to while away his spare time, and gather strength for further duty. There can be no manner of doubt that with multitudes this part of every-day life is a repetition of grievous vices. That which does not stimulate the worst appetites is deemed by many insipid and worthless; jaded with toil, such persons seek in the hottest and fiercest excitements the balm for their weariness. In proportion to the brevity of the hours of relaxation is the intensity of the misnamed pleasure in which they indulge. As religion penetrates every-day life, the whole tone of recreation rises in character, until it becomes harmless, pleasant, virtuous, holy, religious, and useful. To promote this end is one great enterprise of the

Church of God. I do not mean that it is the duty of the Christian Church to provide recreation for the people; but I believe that it is of the very essence of Christianity to further every effort that may abridge the hours of labour, increase the comforts and improve the dwellings of the poor, and help every man to discover the pleasures of his own fire-side. It is ours to contend against the gigantic vices that stalk through the land, bedizened with all the names of pleasure,—vices which are slaying their thousands and tens of thousands, and which are, with unblushing effrontery, defying all the armies of the living God.

That religion which does not enter into these four regions of a man's life,—his *talk*, his *wishes*, his *work*, and his *recreation*,—is as yet utterly inoperative; and we must endeavour now, in few words, to examine the Scripture doctrine of religious life, bearing in mind that *life* includes always the several elements that have been enumerated. "We should live," says the Apostle, "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." In other words, in our conversation, our desires, our occupation, and our pleasures, we should do three things:—

Gain the victory over our passions,—"*live soberly.*"

Respect all the claims of our neighbours,—"*live righteously.*"

Derive all our motives from the highest source,—"*live godly.*"

(1) It is clear, from what I have said, that neither the drunkard, the liar, nor the man who "forgets God," whatever may be his occasional profession, can possibly be a religious man. But the requirements of the Gospel mean a great deal more than that. Thus, SOBRIETY means the chastisement of all our passions, the resolute endeavour to gain and keep the control of all our desires, the determination to repress angry feelings as well as impure fancies, to subdue inordinate affection quite as much as depraved taste. Sobriety means resistance to every form of temptation. It has its realm in work quite as much as in recreation,—in recreation quite as much as in work. Let us remember that the love of money and the insatiate desire of progress in social status deprave much of the business of the world. Do not forget that it is the utterly selfish love of display that brings so many people into extravagant expenditure, and debt, and dishonesty. There is an intemperance in conversation as well as in sensuous pleasures; and the only principle which the Gospel of Jesus Christ recommends and supplies is one that cuts at the root of it all.

It is a miserable and humiliating thing to see these passions of all kinds, acknowledged and felt to be the lowest part of our nature, yet towering above and lording it over the loftiest and noblest faculties that we possess. Here is *man*, a mysterious combination of body and soul, of passions and intellect, of senses and judgment,—on the one side, it is

true, allied to the brute that perisheth, conscious of merely animal propensities; but, on the other side, akin to the loftiest Being, the purest, holiest ONE in the universe. The higher part of our nature *may* be the seat of even godlike attributes, and is capable of heavenly fellowship; it is made in the image of God, and may be adorned with Divine characteristics; it was destined to triumph over the lower nature, to gain thus a victory over evil desires, and to bring the whole of our nature captive to the foot of God's throne. It was meant to fight God's battle, to gain God's victory. But until the passions that reveal themselves in our talk, in our desires, in our work, in our pleasures, are tamed, there is no religion worthy of the name. Let us not be guilty of the meanness of thinking that we can yield to a single passion, and still less, that we can make ourselves the slaves of all our passions, and yet live a holy life, or preserve the image of our God, or be conscious of our personal relations with the Holy One.

(2) **RIGHTEOUSNESS** is clearly something more than a refusal to commit an act of cruelty or dishonesty. Righteous living includes this; but it means very much more than this. It is true that we are not to do certain evil things; but the Apostle tells us that we are to "live righteously;" that is, in our talk, in our wishes, our work, our pleasures, we are to do the just and righteous thing. We must respect every just claim upon us, not merely upon our money, but upon our affection, our reverence, and our good

offices:—and we must recognize and yield the right to every man who has one, to our good words, to our time, to our service, to our best efforts,—or we are not acting justly. To take an instance,—our families have a right to our care, our best labour, our hard-won earnings,—we have no right to spend them selfishly on our own pleasures and indulgence. Strange to say, many a cruel, heartless husband might be trusted with untold gold or silver; and he thinks he is a righteous man, though he has trampled under his feet one of the holiest claims of earth.

Our creditors and our customers, our wives and children, our masters and servants, our friends and acquaintance, all have a righteous claim upon us. If religion is worth anything to us, it is scrupulously alive to every such claim, and it cries aloud in our ears, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

(3) The life here spoken of is to be a life of **GODLINESS**: we must date and draw our motives from the highest source. The government of all our passions, the recognition of every just claim upon us, must spring from no mere vague notion that it is right to do this, but from the discovery of the ground of our nature, our relation to the living God, our obligation to the suffering Saviour, and our responsibility to the Spirit of grace. We are to “live godly in this present world.” Every-day life, in all its branches and divisions, may become a holy service; the strongest reason for doing a right thing, for avoiding a wrong one, is the imposing and majestic thought of the

will and love of God. Every-day life may be governed by this blessed inward thought. I do not mean that the overwhelming majesty of God is always to be a distinct object of thought, or that the stupendous march of His eternity is always to be sweeping over the soul; but that these principles, and ideas, and feelings must always be at hand, just as the love of truth, or wife, or child, of business, or of country may be at hand to animate the student, the workman, the father, the patriot, even though either does not hold the conception of the object of his affection powerfully before his mind. *A godly life consists infinitely more in doing common things under the inspiration of the highest motive, than in simply performing any number of religious acts.* Are any of us sober and righteous in the common acceptance of the terms, and yet despising this loftiest motive, and rejecting this holiest sanction? Is it all the same to you, all the same to God, all the same to the universe, whether you are acting under the impulses of selfishness or love? If you can command your passions simply from a regard to your health, and pay your debts for the honour of the thing, and be just to your wife and children for the sake of the mere convenience and comfort of the proceeding, do you think that all is well, and that your every-day life is complete? I know several men who would be miserable if they found that their expenditure had exceeded their income by a single pound; and if a fraction of a penny were wrong in their accounts,

they would spend weeks of time rather than not discover the mistake,—whereas, perhaps, they are content to omit, in the daily reckoning of mercy and duty, of passion and inclination, all remembrance of “Him in whom they live, and move, and have their being.” If you want to do that which is right, and to hate and avoid that which is wrong,—if you would have an absorbing and commanding reason for always doing the wisest, the truest, and the best thing,—if you would be governed by the highest principle, and have your talk, your desires, your work, your pleasures purified and holy,—you must find this reason on the unveiled face, the smile, the approbation of God Himself; and you will ever feel that though your conduct is not worth His smile, yet it is heaven upon earth to secure it.

You may, my brethren, “do everything as unto God.” You may not only praise God on Sundays, but you may work on other days to Him. You may not only consecrate your hard and virtuous toil, but even your pleasures and recreation. If your wishes cannot be turned into prayers, extinguish them. If you cannot ask God’s blessing on your pleasures, avoid and renounce them. If you allow yourself any indulgence or any habit in the enjoyment of which the presence of God would be utterly incongruous and unwelcome,—if you are seeking, in the pursuit of any species of pleasure, some place where God *is not*,—let me conjure you, as you love your own soul, from this night to abandon it.

You may not unnaturally respond to all this : ' We cannot change our ingrained nature. It is of no use to bid the paralytic walk, or the Ethiopian to change his skin : and it is of no more use to bid us renounce our secret desires, our habitual work, our daily recreation.' You are right, my brethren ! But this grand result can be, and *is*, perpetually effected by the power and teachings of God's grace. No creature can be trained to rise above his own nature or capacities ; but man's truest nature is divine ; and that which you have been intended, destined, fitted for, you may *learn* to be. There is a power which can educate or draw out from their hidden recesses these germs of holy life. There is that which can *teach* you by "denying all ungodliness," "to live godly," and by "denying and repudiating all worldly lusts," "to live soberly and righteously." Be encouraged ! there is that in you which is competent to receive Divine impressions. You may be changed from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of God. Out of the rough-hewn and defiled quarry of your heart, the great Architect can build a living shrine, a holy temple, for His glory. In your renewed and purified soul, the Lord can so destroy all evil as to image to His universe His own perfections ; and from the breath of your emancipated spirits He can create the harmonies and draw forth the loud and long hosannahs of the highest heaven.

If you ask me for the influence that is strong enough to produce so stupendous a result, my text

supplies the answer. It is not merely the *holiness* of God thundering down your sins; it is not the *power* of God threatening to crush you under its adamant wheels; it is not the mere *pity* of God grieving over your miserable bondage; it is not merely the *mercy* of God, which is prepared to snap those fetters that bind you hand and foot, or that link you on to the long train of sin's convicts who are wending their way to His eternal prison-house; it is not merely the *wisdom* of God, declaring to you that "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness," and holding before you the exalted ideal of all excellence;—but it is "the *grace* of God that bringeth salvation."

This is the noblest and most comprehensive of all God's self-manifestations. Here is not only the promise of mercy, but such a promise that if it be accepted, it supplies all needful strength to do His will. The grace of God is *love* founded on righteousness, and love infusing holiness into our nature. We cannot believe in the application of that pardon to our own case without hating the sin that needs such an amnesty. The assurance of pardon is given in the desire for holiness; and God Himself becomes so infinitely attractive and loveable, that "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks," we begin to long and pant after Him. Even the consciousness of sinfulness, instead of, as heretofore, driving us away from God, now makes us feel that we cannot exist without Him. We have felt that by sin we were cast out of His sight and shut up to ourselves, but the grace

of God appears to us, to tell us that we may forsake our sins and find mercy. "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

The old desires of our nature are eaten out of us by the introduction of newer, nobler passions,—our inclinations are enlisted on the side of righteousness, and now reinforce the claims of conscience. Our speech is seasoned with this grace, and sublimed into holy song, or humble praise. Our work becomes a Divine service, our pleasures a sacrament of love.

Believe, my brethren, in the love of God which has been revealed to you, which you may hitherto have coldly, or boldly, or madly defied, but which has never ceased to pursue your soul. Do not misconceive it, do not limit it, do not say that it is inapplicable to yourself; do not theorize about it, but in God's Name believe it. Then your every-day's life shall be a life of love, a song of praise; and then you will find yourselves saying, all unbidden,—

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God.

Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love
Fit us for perfect rest above;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray!"

SERMON XV.

THE SUMMONS TO HOLY WORK.

PSALM XCIV. 16.

*Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up
for me against the workers of iniquity?*

THERE is no superscription to this Psalm. There is no indication of its authorship, of the period at which it was written, or of the circumstances to which it refers. There are many of these anonymous hymns in God's Book of Remembrance, nameless utterances, voices of the night of weeping, shouts from the mountain-tops of thought, prayers unto the God of Life, which belong to no individual, can be fathered on no solitary period, but descend as an heirloom to successive ages, and enrich every generation. As the circumstances, the victories, the shortcomings, and the possibilities of men are continually being repeated, so the religious experiences of the Church do often reappear in its history, and we may receive the inspired utterances of them in one age as almost equally appropriate to the sorrows and joys of another age. How often have the trials, the perils,

the deliverances of God's Church been expressed in those Divine words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge!"

How has the graveyard echoed age after age the words of the Man of God, which were first liberated from the strings of his mighty harp amid the rocks of the Arabian Desert, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place from one generation to another!" The old kingdom of God could utter the whole of the fervid prayer contained in this Psalm from its oft-restrained heart. Not only so, but the Church of Christ in these latter days, amid bonds and imprisonments, persecution and apathy, work and fear, has been fain to pour out its sorrows and its faith in these Divine words. The Church of God, or rather the Divine Spirit, the Christ within it, is ever crying out, as some venerable saint of the olden time did, for the manifestation of God; is always beseeching the Most High God to reveal His glory; is now imploring Him to have respect to the dark places and cruel habitations of the earth; and does not fail to recognize, as in this Psalm, the proofs of Divine goodness, and knowledge, and power, which can and must outbid and overawe the conspiracies, the malignity, and the perseverance of evil.

It is hardly possible to read this Psalm through, without feeling that the inspired voice in it denounces the unbelief of the heathen world. One

must see that the faith of the Psalmist is quickened to a burning heat by the glance that he has cast over the idolatries and follies of our race. When a man has come to a deep conviction of the Oneness of Jehovah every other worship is to him an abomination, for such worship must either be an awful rivalry to Him whose glory cannot be given to another, or must involve a total misconception of His nature and a blasphemous corruption of His Name. There have been times in the history of God's people when their loyalty to Him has consumed every lax notion about other lords; when, burning with zeal, with reverence, with godly fealty to the Great King, and sickened at perceiving the countless multitudes of those who are treacherously rebelling against Him, the true Israel has lifted up its voice for help, and identifying itself with God's holiness and kingdom, has called aloud for self-sacrifice and devotedness, exclaiming in the Name of God, "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"

We may regard these words as parallel at least to those of the Judges and Lawgivers of Israel, of men who when the very existence of Israel as a nation was trembling in the balance, and when devotedness and loyalty were demanded by the circumstances of the case, called with trumpet-voice to the brave and true-hearted among them to be "on the Lord's side," and "cursed bitterly" those who would not come "to the help of the Lord against the mighty." It is

reasonable to suppose that ever since the day when the Son of God took our nature on Him and bore our sins, and dragged that cross of His to Calvary, He has been uttering them afresh. Open your ears, my brethren, to listen, not to my poor words, but to the voice of Him against whom the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law, against whom the powers of the world have been so long in combination, the treatment of whom by the men He died to save has been so mean, so ungrateful, so cruel, so mad, so blasphemous. Listen, hearken to Him, for it is no other than your Lord who is pleading with you to be on His side, to gather together unto Him, to rise up for Him against the workers of iniquity.

First, let us review a few characteristics of these evildoers. We will not go back into the past for our illustrations, but simply ask your consideration of some obvious facts.

(1) Look at the NUMBER of the evildoers. Figures and comparisons of figures give but a very feeble impression of this terrible fact. Surely it should be burned into our recollection and give force and spur to all our thoughts about the world, that not more than one-seventh of the human race is even nominally Christian; and that among these Christians are reckoned all the populations of Austria, France, Russia, America, and Spain; the Greeks, the Copts, and the Armenians; the priest-ridden inhabitants of Brazil and Mexico, and all the crowds of our English cities; the Sabbath-breakers, the despisers of God's

love, the haters of God's law, the drunkard, the harlot, the miser, the dotard, and the fool. Verily, an accumulation of sin, a multitude of evildoers, are to be found in so-called Christendom!

But let us turn from the one-seventh to the six-sevenths of this world's population. Here, notwithstanding all our grievous imperfections, we are passing out of Goshen into Egyptian darkness. Do you ever sit still and ponder the multitudes of China? Imagine them in their crowded cities, in their teeming villages, in their busy marts, on their great canals and navigable rivers, with all their self-sufficiency, their licentiousness, their man-worship, their denial of, or their gross emphatic indifference to, the Being who made them. Do you ever travel in thought over the mountains of India, and try and trace its vast rivers to the ocean, and pass in review the hordes of Affghanistan and the Punjaub, of Rohilcund, Oude, and Behar, of Bengal and Bombay, the Deccan and Mysore? Can you watch them crowding into Benares on some renowned feast-day of Hinduism, or filling the mosques of Lucknow on some great Mahomedan fast? and then, before your gaze is quite absorbed or your heart riven, can you transport yourself to Thibet, and see the worshippers of the Llama, the chief pontiff of Buddhism, and the priest-ridden hordes of Tartary, Burmah, Siam, Ceylon, given over to the deadly fear, the virtual atheism, the proud self-sufficiency, the man-worship, and deep superstitions of Buddha? Then on some strong

pinion do you cross the Arabian Desert to Mecca and El Medina, and see the caravans from every part of the dominions of Islam assembling to honour the false prophet? Have you ever thought of the Moors and Berbers, the ferocious Moslems of Constantine, and the high-spirited Bedouin of the Desert, the Persian, the Turk, the Hindu, and the Cingalese, the Syrian Pasha and the Egyptian Fellah, all worshipping, revelling, dancing together about the prophet's birthplace and his grave? Oh! those interminable processions, those long strings of camels, those dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, those living lines that stretch across the deserts of Araby the Blest! Can you image to yourselves those multitudes of evildoers?

Then can you sweep on your hasty wing away, to follow the track of Livingstone, and Speke, and Burton, among the tribes of Central Africa, and complete your review with the hundreds of thousands of men who seem there to be removed but a few sad steps above the brutes that perish, or with the naked Fuegian savages, living under the pitiless rains of the south polar seas, feeding on raw fish and carrion, with no idea of God, no hope, no law, no virtue, no sense of truth or shame—our vain but strongest hope about whom is, that they have no souls? However this may be, there they are, cursing the earth, and humbling man's image to the dust. Have you completed your survey yet? Think of the slave countries, and of the dwellers in the thousand islands of the

seas. Alas! our hearts sicken at the recital. The multitudinousness, whatever may be the character, of those who are denying the sovereignty of God, and resisting or utterly ignoring the love of Christ, is inconceivably appalling; but it is by no means the most solemn consideration.

(2) Let us add to this enumeration some conception of the *variety* of the evildoers. They differ almost infinitely from each other, and there are broad lines of distinction among them which shew that their opposition to God is not the result of some one physical condition, but that it proceeds from totally different causes, and that our treatment of them must be regulated by entirely different considerations. The white man and the Christian, when he presses into the interior of China, is regarded as a mean interloper, "a foreign devil," something scarcely fit to be spit upon, so utterly is he, in the estimation of the people, below the dignity and sublimity of the Chinese nation. On the contrary, when the Christian finds his way to the heart of Africa, in the person of some Moffat or Livingstone, he has great difficulty in preventing the impression that he is something more than human. The differences of race, of climate, of prejudices, of traditions, are almost infinite. If the evildoers are to be reduced, if the human race is to be modified in those faiths and practices which now give it an awful intensity of evil, which are the millstones round its neck dragging it down to perdition, how varied must be

the operations of those who would fain become the saviours of the world !

In one place there is subtle speculation, in another gross vice ; here utter indifference, there wild fanaticism ; in one tribe crushing ignorance, in another daring philosophy and luxuriant imagination. Some there are, who under the stimulus of history and myth are virtual adorers of humanity, as the Confucianist and the Northern Buddhist ; others, without traditions, or love, or duty, cherish no reverence, and fear no evil. The regiments of the prince of this world wear various uniforms ; the mutineers in God's army are widespread and bear divers colours : they speak a hundred dialects or tongues, and are scattered over the whole world. Amid the varieties that we have to contend against, and the sins that we know to be grieving the heart of Immanuel, let us not forget to characterize the sympathizers with evil who are in our homes and at our side. Let us not omit to notice the men who find in the variety of the mutineers some arguments against the legitimacy of the Great King, who give to these forms of evil-doing gentle names, who are hopeless about the work of their reduction, and give it up in despair. There is, indeed, an utter worldliness which seems regaled with the idea of the inefficiency of all missionary operations, which covers its hatred to Christ under the form of philosophic and judicious disapproval of Christian missions ; which never loses an opportunity of instilling prejudices against their

claims, of impugning their usefulness, and sneering at their work.

(3) It may be observed in reference to these evil-doers, that they are *closely organized*. The differences of which we have spoken in race, position, language, religion, philosophical character, take great leading types, and have prominent characteristics. There are millions of dogmatic atheists, whose religion and whose law ignore the Creator, who believe in the eternity of matter, the perpetual recurrence of physical changes, the endless transmigration of souls, and the great blessedness of final extinction; whose ideal of excellence is a simply human ideal, whose law is moral in theory but powerless as a motive, and whose melancholy dogmas, after spreading over one-third of the human race, are losing their hold on the masses who profess to believe in them. Whatever might affect powerfully the Fohist of the Celestial Empire would before long strike deep into the heart of the Burmese, and the inhabitant of Nepaul, of Ceylon, and Japan. There are subtle links of faith that bind the millions of the East, and move them in vast masses. In China the devotees of Confucius and the sect of the believers in Laotse, though differing widely from the Buddhist in their metaphysical position, come practically to the same ignoring of all spiritual truth, and to a virtual man-worship. Educated on one type, influenced by the same traditions, moulded by the same general system of government and science, there is abundant organization and much

coincidence of action. They have traditions that rival ours in antiquity, they have philosophical speculations that exceed ours in subtlety, they have a floating idea of right approximating ours in theoretic purity. It is profoundly difficult to make way against the tremendous tide of opinion, practice, and reverence that flows in upon us from all the generations of the past, when we rise up against those who in the name of their religion and their philosophy resist the authority, laugh at the promises, despise the law, and trample on the blood of Christ. Again; in India, with all the varieties of faith that prevail on that Continent of nations, now subject to the sway of Victoria, there are great and startling signs of combination against God and His Christ. Caste is not an opinion which may be shewn here and once for all to be an absurdity, but it is a great social condition, which penetrates every relationship of life, which being sanctified in the later religious books is a subtle and vast enrolment of Hindus against the personal responsibility, the equality and brotherhood of man; which raises at every point of the social scale a whole army, compact in its phalanx and determined in its spirit against all the broadest, noblest, most spiritual teaching of Christ. Take away caste from the Brahmin, and you deprive him of his birthright. Take away caste from the mind of the Hindu, and you take away his living God. The most acute minds, and the best educated of the native populations, fight against all that we believe to be

sacred and holy, with the desperation of men who are contending for the altar, the homesteads, the graves of their fathers.

(4) Finally, reflect on the *depravity* of these evil-doers. It is not the mere ignorance which heathendom reveals—ignorance of law, ignorance of God, ignorance of the claims of Christ upon them—which constitutes their chief danger or our main responsibility—although the Apostle speaks to the shame of Corinthian Christians, that some have not the knowledge of God—but it is the fearful corruption of man under these various forms of Christless, Godless life. Everywhere we discover the trace of conscience; in many places we find the clear utterance of that moral law which is identical with the constitution of man, and belongs to him by the nature that God has given him. The main outline of moral duty is expressed in the code of MENU and in the books of CONFUCIUS, just as it may be found in the speculations of SOCRATES and in the Sutras of BUDDHA; but nowhere do we find motives which are strong enough to lift the soul into harmony with that law. Everywhere we find a religious sanction given to its modification or its violation, including even the grossest crimes. The Apostle's description of the sins of the heathen world as he saw it, under the light of the dying embers of the Socratic philosophy, remains still the most masterly sketch of what man is without God and without Christ in the world.

In these lands of which we are speaking there is

no public opinion against sins of the foulest, most unmentionable kinds. The natural affection which is so warm an ally of the Gospel of Christ, and which gives us in the name of father, mother, wife and child, the terms by which we can learn our relation to God, Christ's relation to us, and our own relation to one another, is set madly at defiance by the precepts of the religions of India. Infancy cannot shield itself from the ruthless selfishness of the hardened heart; the delicate Rajput princess will slaughter her helpless infant girl in deference to the requirements of a hateful superstition. Age is not sheltered from the inhuman hands which hurry it in dying agonies along the banks of the Ganges, where British steamers are daily passing with their freights of men, of ammunition, of commerce and of mercy. Hundreds of our fellow-subjects are at this moment religiously struggling in the agonies of suffocation. Filial hands have dragged them there to die, and the bald-headed vultures are wheeling in the air and waiting for their prey. Woman, who under the influence of the religion of Christ has risen to be more than the helpmeet of man,—for she is the refiner and purifier, the educator, the joy, the equal of man,—woman, who might be the link that binds man to the unseen, as she grasps *him* with the one hand and the cross of Jesus with the other,—woman in India is still degraded into being the slave of his pleasures, the link which thralls him to the most besotting superstition. Murder, theft, falsehood, adultery, and lust are *not*

sins against God in the estimation of these evil-doers; there is no higher sentiment even occasionally expressed, to keep the pollution in check; while the few individual exceptions of humanity, honour, and purity produce scarcely an appreciable effect upon the mass of loathsome corruption that prevails. There are degrees of sin, and deeper depths of pollution. We would not blacken our poor humanity beyond its deserts, but nowhere, not even amid the most polished provinces of India and China, can we find a righteous class, or discover anything approximating a moral elevation—a standard of excellence which can excite the faintest hope that heathenism has within itself the elements of improvement or the seeds of life. Even the few exceptions of men whose virtues have been notorious, whose temptations have been overcome, whose philosophy, whose affections, or whose patriotism have triumphed over their lust, and been mighty enough to redeem them by God's grace from the universal pollution, do after all shed the most terrible light over the corruption that is untouched, and reveal throughout the wide extent of man, the presence of a power and of possibilities, of a conscience, a freedom, and a spirit in man which leave him, as the Apostle says, "without excuse."

It is not for us to penetrate into the mysteries of another world; we feel lost and confounded with the effort. But we know this, that the vast multitudes of heathens are hopelessly evildoers. Almost wherever we come upon them we see that they are unholy,

profane, adulterers, murderers and injurious. We cannot find them anywhere saved from the wrath that now is; it is obvious that they are not saved *from sin*, and they die with a lie in their right hand.

We may mourn over their lot, we may pity their sorrows, but we must denounce their sins. We shall sear our own consciences, we shall be treacherous to God, unless we know how to condemn the corruption, the blasphemy, and the impurity that prevail throughout those dark places of the earth. The dangers that hover over, the flames that seem to creep up from beneath, and writhe already round about our brethren—even with the widest deduction we can make, the hopefulest view that we try in our most charitable, expansive moods to take—are enough to scorch us with their glare, and to rouse every passion, every energy we possess, to some fresh sympathy with the God who is so wickedly trifled with.

When we sit at home in the midst of our privileges and ponder the infinite love of God, knowing how all the hosts of heaven obey Him, and how the wrath of man is made to praise Him, and that even devils believe and tremble, we take heart and hope. The very universality of the evil seems to lessen its frightfulness, and the extent of the calamity to render it inconceivable. But if we were to travel to the haunts of Juggernaut, or witness a cannibal revel, or mingle in a swinging feast, we should find it—on the testimony of all missionaries—by no means so difficult a thing to believe, that very often the

heathen is doomed to the grievous and uttermost penalty of eternal death.

We could not bear our life unless we could fall back in some mysterious way upon the righteousness, the equity, the love of God; upon the hope that our feelings may be overpitched, that our knowledge of man, of probation, of God, and of eternity, must necessarily be most defective. Where to see the deliverance, where to discover a ray of hope, on what principle or what promise to rest our more charitable and benevolent anticipation, it is difficult to say. It will not do for us, my dear brethren, to say that if these millions are lost for ever our nature recoils so intensely from the thought that *we* must be more merciful and gracious than the all-loving Father—a thing which cannot be,—for that would prove too much. There is the evil *now*, which man is doing under God's sun; there is the atheism now in the world which He has made; there is the mad pollution, the hell on earth, which man has fashioned in spite of all God's mercies. If our will, our desire, were omnipotent, we fancy we could remedy all this present evil at once; we may in our conceit think ourselves wiser, more merciful than God. In God's permission of this evil in His universe there is proof that suffering like this must be consistent with His mercy and His power. He does not crush and extinguish the souls of men; He has not expelled the evil from the world, nor has He overpowered it with His grace. There it is; to every believer in God a terrible

assurance that there are vaster, deeper purposes in God's plans than we can fathom, and therefore purposes which must be, yea which clearly are, consistent with the woes which interminable millions have brought upon themselves. "It is," says Archer Butler, "a matter of great thankfulness that we can and do believe that which adequately and deeply to feel were death." There are also ineradicable convictions that in not one single instance will any despotism in God's government trample upon justice, or render hopeless the condition of one sinner by arbitrary fiat; in not one instance will justice render the outgoings of mercy impossible. Christ has died that He might be Lord of the dead and of the living. Those who see no power in the Atonement beyond its subjective operation and imitation by man, must be in deep horror here; but we believe that it is an objective fact, and has infinite efficacy to take away the curse and stay the consequences of sin. We glory in the cross of Christ.

II. In the *second* place, let us consider the course which God has taken with these evildoers, and also what is involved in the appeal here uttered.

From the language of my text, solemn, almost fierce in its tone, uttered by the living Word of God in the Church of every age, we may gain some hints of the meaning of this appeal. "Who will rise up for Me against the evildoers?" "Who is on the Lord's side?" "Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?" By these appeals to the heart of His

people, God seems to tell us that He is not going to crush, or destroy, or convert, or save these evil-doers by any fiat of omnipotence, by any touch of His imperial sceptre. His method has always been to teach men by men; to uproot error by truth; to overturn and undermine evil influence by good influence; to conquer darkness by light; to drive out hatred by love. Nature has unveiled her charms, unlocked her treasures, lavished her favours, and given her very self to individuals, *not* to multitudes; to men first, and afterwards to nations. God's greatest acts of revelation have been made through human minds. Even the Lawgiving on Sinai, and the Sacrifice on Calvary, and the Spirit-baptism of Pentecost, were made world-wide facts through men. God needed, as it were, human minds and human help to convey His law to Israel, to convey His love to man, to convey His Spirit to the Church. He has always chosen to summon man to His counsels, to make the children of men the messengers of His will, the ambassadors of His amnesty, the vessels of His Spirit. Did He choose to unveil the working of conscience in its freedom and dignity to the Greek nation? I believe that He unveiled His own nature to Socrates. Did He mean that primeval tradition and that moral law should be made known to the East? I hold that He quickened the understanding and strengthened the purpose of Confucius and Menu, that they might write those great words of theirs on the rock for

ever. Did He intend to rebuke the pride of Pharaoh, and abash the presumption of Nebuchadnezzar, and take away the name of Babylon? To accomplish this result He sent by men His messages, which fell like doom on big proud hearts. Did He determine to gather all His revelations together, all the wisdom and all the desire of the nations, all that prophets had foretold, all that types had foreshadowed? He took up the *manhood* of Jesus into His own Godhead, and made that great light henceforth to rule the day, and He made the reflections of His glory—as all lesser lights really are—to rule the night; and ever since the exaltation of Jesus, when He intends to reach the hearts and conquer the wills of men by His love, He calls the sons of men, the brethren of Jesus, to His help against the mighty.

It is not, however, that God is weak and needs our help, but that for infinitely perfect reasons, He chooses thus to conquer His enemies, to bless His children, to overpower evil, to unfold truth, and to accomplish redemption by means of man. Now, while all things save man are ready to do His bidding, He says to this power, "Go, and it goeth," and to another, "Come, and it cometh," and to His servant, "Do this, and he doeth it;" to His whole Church He makes the stirring mysterious appeal, "Who will rise up for Me against the evildoers?" The evil-doing is done against Him; all iniquity is dishonour done to Him; all idolatry is sin against Him; all falsehood and lust, all murder and blasphemy, are

wrought against Him. The wrongs that are done against individuals soon wear themselves out. He is the Eternal Lord, but the most injured Being in the universe.

Such is the constitution of man and the nature of God's purposes, that He chooses, by creation, by providence, by man, to bring His own love and His own Spirit to bear upon human hearts; and thus He summons His creatures to stand up for Him against the workers of iniquity.

• III. Let us then, in the *third* place, examine briefly the response which is made to this appeal.

Nature is ready to rise up for God against the evildoers. The sun arises from the eastern wave to answer the glorious summons, and declares that he will go and shine upon the just and upon the unjust, and will "give them fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But alas! in reply to this, men adore the SUN for his benefits, and heap all the names of Deity upon *him*; and then continue their sad alienation by changing "the glory of the incorruptible God into a creature made like unto corruptible man, four-footed beasts, and creeping things." All creation has been ready to bear Jehovah's impress, all history to reveal His purpose; but still the earth has been corrupt before Him, and "there has been none righteous, no not one." Again and again Jehovah has asked, "Who will rise up for Me against the evildoers?" Tremendous ocean once heaved from his rocky bed, and in the roaring of his billows said,

‘I will sweep the accursed race of man from the face of the earth.’ And it was so; and though riding on the utmost verge, secure above the pitiless storm, floated the ark that held the destinies of the world, yet there bestrode every crested wave of those funereal waters a messenger from Him to whom vengeance belongs, uttering in awful tones the sentence, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Again has the earth become corrupt before God, and been filled with violence. Again He has asked for help against the workers of iniquity and the passions of men; and lo! the lust of rule, the spirit of conquest, the demon of war, have come up before Him. Dim shapes of crown and sceptre have been seen through the gloom, and they have said one to another, ‘We will go and make inroads on these hoary superstitions, we will drag millions of men away from their homes, leading them into new regions of thought; we will bring the civilization of distant tribes together, and break down the barriers of millenniums.’ Western conquerors carry civilization into the East, crusaders mingle the world together, barbarians break the pride of Rome, England humbles the prejudices of Hindustan. Come, brethren, and see the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. “It is He that maketh wars to cease; that breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder: He burneth the chariot in the fire.” It must be allowed that good has come out of this great evil; that evildoers have been overpowered by evildoers, that crime has

been abashed by crime, that superstition has been crushed by fanaticism. The enemies of the Lord have fought against each other, and the wrath of man has been made to praise Him.

But now be still, and know that He is God. He is not exalted thus; "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." He needs other and nobler service; and who will rise up for Him? There is a fearful company drawing near; they are strong to destroy; they are waiting to do the behest of the Most High. They have often risen up against the evildoers. There is a black banner floating over them, and they are led on by Death himself; their names are Cholera, and Plague, and Famine, and Madness; and they promise great things. 'We will,' say they, 'hang on the track of the idolatrous procession, we will guide the wheels of Juggernaut, we will haunt the Mecca caravan; we will sack the crowded city; we will sweep away these workers of iniquity, and cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.'

Behold them, my brethren; see them as John saw them, in the Apocalypse; those fire-breathing horses of death, with those that sat upon them. "Their heads are as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths come fire and brimstone, and smoke; and by these is the third part of men killed;" and yet, as it was in that vision of John, "the rest of the men that are not killed by these plagues, repent not of the works of their hands, that they should not

worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk; neither repent they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

But the Lord calls again, mightily and with a loud voice, "Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers?" And now a peaceful group come smiling on, confident in their strength, instinct with hope and promise—they are Science and Commerce, Civilization and Law. They engage to explode the superstitions of the people by accurate knowledge, to revolutionize the ideas of men by predicting and modifying the forces of nature; by making man master of his circumstances. Commerce will bind the nations into new and better fellowship, and promises at some great jubilee to break the fetters of every slave, to undermine every tyranny, to weld into one living brotherhood the savage and the civilized. Science will loosen the spell of many a dire and deadly superstition, and, as a great revelation of the ways of Him who worketh all in all, will prepare the way for clearer conceptions of Him who is the one Father as well as the one Lord of the spirits of all flesh. But, my brethren, let us never be led away by the delusion that powers like these can reach the root of the evil. Commerce and science may produce a temporary effect, and give rise to new evils that they cannot check. If the passions of men are not subdued, science and commerce and

wealth will only provide stronger stimulus and more extended means of gratification. Our matchless navigation, all the lessons of the stars, the discoveries of the astronomer, the toils of the meteorologist, may be devoted to the horrors of the middle passage, and to the ruthless use of transcendent power. Our science is perfecting the art of destruction, and our commerce may be made the agency with which civilization may bully the weak, tyrannize over the helpless, and rob the paralyzed. A science, which in itself gives no revelation of God, introducing itself among a nation of virtual secularists, will, it is to be feared, transform them by thousands into the most unimpressible of all unbelievers—the daring blasphemers against God. Science may furnish new links between man and nature, commerce may bind him more closely to his fellow, but after they have done their utmost, we hear the loud, the awful voice of God still urging the inquiry, “Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?” who will come “to the help of the Lord against the mighty?” These hired servants of God have done their work or are doing it, but the courteous Hindu or Mahometan who can spell through the Principia of Newton, and make something of the chemistry of Liebig, who can read our Shakespeare and Milton, and trade in our cotton and broad-cloth, has shewn himself to have still the soul of the tiger and the spirit of the asp. Science, commerce, luxury, a polished language and unlimited resources, have had their day

before now and utterly failed, having miserably succumbed in revelry, suicide, and hell. Never let us hope that we can save Africa with cotton, or India with railways; the Moslem is not softened by a telegraph, nor the Dyak of Borneo purified by geometry. God calls for other helpers and reiterates the appeal, "Who will rise up for Me against the evil-doers? who will stand up for Me against the workers of iniquity?" and lo! by the side of all these shadowy forms, an angel of light, "a mighty angel, comes down out of heaven, and the earth is lightened with his glory; a rainbow is upon his head, and his face is as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and *he hath in his hand* A LITTLE BOOK." The thunders utter their voices, and "another angel appears, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto all kindreds and people and languages that dwell on all the face of the earth." There is in the Gospel of God, in the revelation of His real nature, that which can, and does, take the soul of man captive, which is equal to every emergency that can arise, which is God's hammer for breaking the stony heart, God's sword for piercing even to the dividing asunder of the thoughts and intents of the heart. In the Gospel we have that description of the Most High that undermines the necessity which the trembling conscience has felt for its own base and corrupt representations of God. The Gospel appeals to man's affections, and seeks to enlist them on the side of virtue. It grasps and occupies the intellect with the most

satisfactory solutions of the great problem of destiny, and while it appeases the struggling violence of the great spiritual wrestler, and with magic force hushes the passionate eagerness of the student of truth, a little child is charmed by the simplicity that is in Christ. There is no kind of evil which it cannot mitigate. It eats out the fangs of remorse, and heals the wounds and torments of fear; it assuages the feverish thirst for other things, and lifts the soul above the tyranny of sense, the crush of little cares, the burden of heavy responsibilities, the pangs of bereavement, disappointment, and ruin. It is a compensation for the bitterest lot, it is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In the Gospel of Christ there is the only stay of human corruption, the only rival to the world's fascinations, the only power which is merciful to the sinner while it is just to his sin. It is God's method to overwhelm and subdue the heart of man, to change the evil-doer, not by His threats, but by His amnesty—not by the thunder of law, but by the sovereign pleading of love. It is a power which God's creature can wield for God, a method of conquering God's enemies in which even man may become a captain, a hero, in which all the energies of human nature are called into play, all the developments of science and commerce and industry are laid under contribution to do His will. Wheresoever this power has gone it has gained victories. Every sanctuary, every log-cabin where the name of Jesus has been breathed, is a scene where a battle has been

fought against evil-doers, and a victory has been won. With whatsoever individual, class, or nation it comes fairly into contact, the evil is driven out, the tendencies to good sublimed and purified. It is the Gospel which shews the only way of meeting the clamour of insulted conscience, and supplies motives strong enough to lift the soul into harmony with its own moral law.

The missionary of the Cross, who can go into heathen lands and live and die there for Christ, who can carry the good news of God reconciled to man, who can bring that truth into close contact with the conscience of man, has done more telling service against the powers of darkness than all the denunciations of broken law, all the grim messengers of death, all the emissaries of civilization, all the armies of this world put together have ever effected. The history of Christian missions is the heroic history of humanity. The bald facts assume miraculous grandeur, and stand out in the calm light of day as though magnified by the haze of centuries and the belief of buried generations. I hold that there is nothing more sublime in history than the triumphs of the missionary during the last half century. When he has lifted his sword, a flash of heaven's own light has cleared the way before him. When he has opened his "little book," the thunders have uttered their voices. His message has been as the little leaven, whose properties have diffused themselves through vast masses of humanity. His

influence has been that of the mustard-seed, which even while we have gazed has become the greatest of trees, so that the fowls of heaven have taken refuge under its branches. Further, the Gospel has triumphed over every kind of man: over the cannibal shut away and cut off from all the influences of civilization; over the Laplander in his dismal night amid the gloom of the Arctic winter; over the luxurious Asiatic in the midst of his sensuous paradise on earth, tearing him away from the dream of a still more voluptuous paradise in heaven; over the Brahmin and the Buddhist saint, already ranked among the gods; over the slave-driver and the slave; over the Jew still glorying in his superb pedigree and hating the Nazarene; over the Greek still speculating on the mysteries of creation, in Germany and Oxford, in Geneva and New York; over the "male and the female," over the "bond and the free." The history of this triumph is the response that God's children ever give to the tremendous appeal of the text.

How small our efforts, how unworthy our sacrifices, how insufficient our love, how feeble our grasp of this great invitation! Yet how stupendous have been the results of Missionary enterprise. Our devotion to this grand work has been as yet feeble, fitful, fragmentary, unworthy of our profession. There have been few acts of real self-denial, few lives have been resolutely sacrificed on this altar; yet we have only to look at Madagascar, the West Indies, Burmah and Hindoostan, for colossal results. If we



search for the indirect effects of Christian missions on the Heathen world abroad, and on the worldly spirit of our Churches, we may anticipate with some enthusiasm the effects which shall follow, when our zeal shall be commensurate with our faith, and our love correspond in some degree with the magnitude of the work that we have to do.

Do you ask, How shall we obey the summons of the text? I ask you to remember that every child whose heart is touched by the love of Christ, every worker for God who is ready to sacrifice his time, his comfort, his luxury, his life, for Christ, whose sympathy with the advance of God's kingdom is produced by an intelligent understanding of the magnitude of the interests that are at stake; every bedridden, poverty-stricken Christian, who is daily wrestling with God in prayer; every Sunday-school teacher who identifies himself with this great enterprise, not simply by giving money (that is sometimes an easy way of putting aside a pressing claim), but by earnest thought, honest speech, and loyal feeling; every one of us who, appreciating the magnitude, sublimity, and consecration of Christian missions, does devote himself to this work, is responding to this appeal, rises up for God against the evil-doers, enlists in the great battle which can only terminate when death and hell, the beast and the false prophet, are cast into the lake of fire.

SERMON XVI.

THE TEACHER AND THE TAUGHT*.

I TIMOTHY IV. 16.

*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them:
for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that
hear thee.*

It is a common complaint that our ordinary duties, by the very fact that they are daily and constant, lose their power to impress us with their own grandeur. Habit and acquired instincts take the place of lofty motives; unconscious and resistless tendencies often do our work for us, in the place of the intelligent and comprehensive mind, the active and well-balanced will. The result is, that very often the noblest duty becomes the mere revolution of a machine; the divinest sympathies flow in some deep channel of routine; and the sublimest work dwindles into common-place, or is degraded into drudgery. There is an old copy-book sentence about familiarity and what it breeds, perpetually establishing itself in the very heart of benevolent enterprise and high profession.

* This sermon was addressed to a large assembly of Sunday-school Teachers.

Our religious work suffers from the same cause of depression. We may continue to do it, but it is often done from the most tame, worldly, and incompetent motives. When face to face with its hard realities, when hand to hand with the sheer worldliness of a good deal of it, we lose its higher inspirations, and tamper with its heavenly intention.

God has provided a vast system of mutual co-operation and stimulus, by which He means to rouse us from such lethargy, to awaken within us new and higher motives, and has further designed that we should provoke one another to love and to good works. He has given the poet, the artist, the public orator, the successful writer, the preacher of His gospel, a work to do in this matter; and has said to multitudes of His servants, 'Arise, lift and strip the veils which custom has thrown over the face of truth! Awake! clear off the rubbish which has accumulated on the pathways of holy duty, the dead leaves which cover sacred way-marks, the rust which defiles and impedes the wheels of religious organization!' Our Father summons us perpetually to higher exertion and to deeper feeling by one another's conscience, and mercifully provides a scheme of mutual and reciprocal appeal, to war against these depressing tendencies. I know well that the effect of these mutual appeals is considerably diminished by a provoking reflection which pervades the minds of those who need arousing,—namely, that the poet, the preacher, or the writer is *bound* to say such and

NOT

such things; that *he* in his work is exposed to similar temptations and listlessness, and that he needs from others the same kind of stimulus which he ventures to give to them. All this is true, and might reasonably give edge to his discourse; but there is, I fear, a systematic deduction made for his known opinions, for his pledged character, for his professional calling,—and though he is supposed to be perfectly sincere in what he says, yet the unpleasant force of what is said fails to penetrate the thick-skinned conscience of those who have this traitor at work within them. Still, without such help the world and the Church would be far more indifferent and stiff-necked than they are.

Sunday-school teachers are not exempt from this deteriorating influence in the midst of their glorious work. They are often compelled to fall back upon mere habit and fashion, upon rule and common-place, in the discharge of their momentous duties. The holy day comes round, and finds them jaded, it may be, with their week's toil, and distracted with their trials or business; and, alas! the sight of their class does not always drive the world out of their hearts! The Holy Book, ready to flash heaven's light into their souls, seems covered with a film of unintelligibility. The gravest responsibilities do not always succeed in quickening their zeal. The Great Throne of Grace is there, but sometimes their prayers are hindered. There seems nothing sublime in the immediate duty, nothing Divine in the morning's work,

and the too welcome bell rings them away to more congenial occupations. As years pass away, there is a monotony which at last wears many of them out, and they feel that the great and far-reaching enterprise has few attractions for them: it seems to them to be a piece of machinery which can dispense with their languid efforts; and it would be hard work to renew within them their first strong attachment to the duties of a teacher in a Sunday-school.

I have selected for a text words which were addressed by St. Paul to his young friend and coadjutor, Timothy, and which are generally supposed to apply expressly to the ministers of the Gospel. Surely they are none the less appropriate on that account. This judgment about, and use of my text, need in no way interfere with its immediate application to those of you who are Sunday-school teachers, because you too *are* ministers of the Gospel, and that for the following reasons:—first, you are workmen for God; secondly, you are students of God's Word; thirdly, you are servants of His Church; fourthly, you are watchers for souls. Let me make a few remarks on each of these characteristics of your office, with the double intent of arousing you to a larger and nobler view of what that office really is, and of justifying my adaptation to your case of this appeal, and of the grand inducement which follows it.

(1) You are workmen FOR GOD.

The Great Worker has called you to His counsels, and He has assigned to you a task. Much of His

purpose and government, of His mercy and judgment, proceeds in utter independence of all human aid or co-operation; but there is a larger portion of His blessedness which He only communicates to men through the human mind and heart. The human mind is made in the image of God, and the Eternal Son of God has been made man, and the Holy Spirit has taken up His residence and revealed His highest powers in the human soul, so that it is not a dream of the religious enthusiast, that man may be a worker for God, yea, a worker together with God. God waits and asks, as we have seen, for the co-operation of His children, and finds for every kind of talent, intellect, and moral energy, some work to do. In one sense, indeed, every atom of every world is busily at work for God; doing through every moment of its interminable duration a work that no other atom could accomplish; and in one sense, every mind of man has a work to do for God, consciously or unconsciously, which no other mind can accomplish: even its errors, and waywardness, and mistakes having their part to play in the evolution of the Divine plan. We are working all of us a pattern that we cannot see in the great loom of God. We are writing our own biography and our observations of God's ways on paper where already there has been traced the handwriting of Providence. We are playing with the "loaded dice of God," and working out His designs with our free-will. If we consciously accept any charge that seems peculiarly adapted to further the

beneficent purposes and plan of God, we have a double claim on the appellation. He who in every department of thought and education has taught men by man and in the giving of His law and in the proffer of His gospel has perpetually called His children to His side, does whenever He intends to reach the hearts and conquer the wills of the children of men by the love of Christ, call to His help all the brethren of Jesus. Surely the highest dignity He could confer on any human being is to use him for a purpose and work like this.

And now, my brethren, God has given you a message to convey for Him to those who know it not. The young people who are put under your influence were born in ignorance of a fact in His government and of aspects of His character which are of the utmost importance to them to know; you are entrusted with God's message; you have to convey to them the very idea of a righteous Ruler and of a loving Father. You are workers for God,—you have to prepare His way to their hearts,—you have to arrest their attention, to remove their ignorance, to impress them with the great reality of their existence, to shame them for their sins, to warn them of their danger, to wage warfare with their evil habits, to persuade them to flee from the wrath and to accept the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. You cannot do this without God's help: and unless you feel that you are doing God's work, using His strength, labouring for Him in this matter, you will most certainly fail.

It is work for God, and not for yourself. It is your great honour to have it inscribed on your organization, that you are labouring for no mere honour or success, for no reputation or earthly reward,—that you are rendering free, unbought service to the Most High God. God condescends to say, “Work for Me,” —“Work while it is called to-day,”—“Stand no longer idle, go work in My vineyard.” Verily, the thought that the Lord Himself entrusts any portion of His work to your affections, to your energies, to your watchful labour, is a reason intense enough to reduce to utter insignificance all the lower motives which may tend in the same direction.

(2) You are students of GOD’S WORD.

Just as the minister of the Gospel is bound to put forth all the power he possesses to understand the message he delivers,—to acquaint himself with the truth,—to discover its bearings,—to trace its influence through all the spheres of duty,—to know his instructions as an ambassador from Christ,—to make the most of every interview with his Master, and thus to find out His mind,—so, it seems to me, that you too who are teachers are bound to be learners and students of the truth. I am quite sure that if you are not students, if you are not doing your best to understand God’s truth, you will soon exhaust your stock of capital, you will be perpetually baffled when you need not be, by the inquiries of the youngest children, you will not be thoroughly furnished for this great work. If Timothy needed to give him-

self to reading, exhortation, and doctrine, it is equally necessary that you should devote yourselves to the study of revealed truth within your reach, and commune with the Spirit of its Author.

Oh, that much abused book, the Bible!—that much neglected message from heaven to earth!—though we have translated it into all the languages of man, though we have commented upon it until the world seems hardly to contain the books that have been written, though it is made a rival to the Church and to the Christ in the estimation of some, and though others almost idolize its letter, yet how carelessly it is read; how injudiciously, how disingenuously, and with what scanty reflection! How we take our own ideas to it, and then suppose that we have found them there! How we drop our common sense when we set about the interpretation of it! How we sever passages from their connexion; how we dare to slur over the statements that clash with our prejudices; how we give undue, unscriptural importance to certain teachings, and neglect others to which the Holy Ghost has given equal importance! How deceitfully we handle the Word of God! How imperfect is our knowledge of it!

That is indeed a glorious profession in this world which demands from man a knowledge of the words and the thoughts of the Most High,—which is ever striving to find out what the mighty God has veritably spoken in the ear of man; both what He has threatened and what He has promised. The

study of God's Word is the most fascinating and interesting work that any man can engage in, who seeks the expansion or education of his own intellect; but it is the most imperative duty of every one who pretends to make known God's will to others. What should we think of a servant who accepted solemn and heavy responsibilities at our hands, and did not trouble himself to read more than a fifth of the instructions we gave him? What should we think of an ambassador who substituted his own ideas and offers for those of the prince who had commissioned him, and was not acquainted with the documents that gave him all his authority? We cannot therefore do other than regard Sunday-school teachers as professed students of the Book of God. They profess to be "searching the Scriptures" daily; they "rejoice as men who divide great spoil;" their faces are lighted up with the radiance that streams from the handwriting of God. Two or five may be the talents entrusted to them; but they are busy,—faithful over these few things,—getting the prelibations and beginnings of eternal communion with the "Word of God."

(3) You are servants of *THE CHURCH*.

One great function of the Church is to teach the world; "There are many members in one body, and all have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." It may be the function of some to exhort, and some to console; there are some in the Church

whose great work seems to be to *rule*,—let them do this “with diligence;” the work of others is to *give*,—“let them do it with simplicity and cheerfulness.” But he “that exhorteth, let him wait on his exhortation; and he that *teacheth*, on *TEACHING*.” The teaching office of the Church cannot be, and is not, confined to the pastorate; but is spread over a much wider surface: “The Lord has given the word, and great is the company of those that publish it.” The pastor has too many classes before him in his mixed congregation, too little time, too great responsibility, to do all the teaching work of the Church. The teachers in our Universities, Public Schools, Training Schools and Colleges, National Schools and Sunday Schools, might be supposed fairly to represent in some measure the teaching officers of the early Church, and be the very classes which the Apostle has here especially in view. Never let us allow ourselves to cultivate the impression that the Church and the School are separate institutions, resting on different bases, and having different work to do. They are, or ought to be, one and the same institution. Instead of drawing the line between them, instead of making it sharper and more defined, I should like to obliterate the line altogether. The Church should regard the School as a portion of its own operations, and should regard the teachers as its own servants and representatives. Meanwhile the scholars are the children of its love, over whom it yearns with the

bowels of compassion, the tears of affection, and the prayers of faith.

You who are Sunday-school teachers are servants of the Church: let this thought not infrequently arouse your attention, your zeal, and your manly sense of responsibility. May it induce you to "magnify your office," to exult in your work, and to feel, when your class is before you, not only that you have the message of God to deliver, and the result of your study of God's Word to present to those whom you teach, but further, that you have to represent the feelings of hundreds of your fellow-Christians,—the prayers, the wishes, the yearning tenderness of all the Catholic Church of God, with reference to these young claimants for immortality,—these children of the Church,—these heirs of eternity,—these younger brethren and sisters of Jesus.

(4) Once more, you are WATCHERS FOR SOULS.

It is a wise and wonderful thing to win souls, to save souls. He is happy who saves a solitary fact from obscurity, who brings to light a law of nature that had been hidden in darkness, who brings up a precious jewel from the mine or from the deep sea. That man receives the approbation of his fellow-creatures who rescues some monument of other ages from oblivion, or reclaims a waste acre of land from desolation and barrenness. Some modern writers speak about the salvation of portions of mother-earth from uselessness, as though he who accomplished such a task deserved long remem-

brance. My brethren, if you are in earnest in your work, you are doing something incomparably more noble: you are reclaiming a waste that would otherwise bear thorns and cursing for ever, and are transforming it into a garden of the Lord; you are sowing seed of everlasting fruitfulness and beauty in the barren soil—seed that will take up and transform into its own immortal self the ground in which it falls; you are rescuing from neglect pearls that will gleam for ever on the brows of Immanuel; you are creating an endless power for good; you are saving men from sin and from death, and are extinguishing the fires of hell. There they are, those fires, smouldering in young hearts, but you are pouring upon them that water of life which can quench the fires of lust and wash away the ashes of it, which can refresh and animate the whole nature, and be within it as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Oh, beloved friends, do you know what you are doing? Can you realize it? When you see the grace of God, are you glad? when you have won thus some trophies for Christ, does your heart bound within you?

Watchers for souls! Saviours of the lost! Divers into deep oceans for precious jewels! Daring, earnest cultivators of a heavenly soil! Men busy in weaving crowns for the God-man! Humble, earnest workers for God! Ambassadors for Christ! Men and women charged with so weighty an enterprise! Are you habitually aware of the grand dimensions of your work? Do you never slip into routine? Are

you always alive to its magnitude? Can you keep up to your profession? Do you master, in the faith of it, the difficulties that present themselves? Have you no humiliating confessions to make? Do you utter no broken-hearted prayer for help? Do you not sometimes cry, "Lord, send by whom Thou wilt send?" and, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

If so, then let me further endeavour to accomplish the simple end I have in view, by directing your special attention to the language of the Apostle. I have at least proved that it is applicable to the Sunday-school teacher, let me now try to apply it to you.

"Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine; continue in them: and in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and those that hear thee."

Here is a double appeal, and a twofold inducement.

"Take heed both to the doctrine and to thyself," said the Apostle. This was as much as to imply that a man may be persevering, honourable, and sincere, but may teach falsehood, and inculcate for doctrine the commandments of men. On the other hand, he may impart sound doctrine, but his own life and profession may be inconsistent with his teaching. He may water the vineyard of others and neglect his own. He may urge the ways of wisdom upon his hearers and desert them himself. The Apostle demands the eloquence of a holy consistent life, and he asks for the salt of truth, and the fiery virtue of the doctrine of God. He will not have the services of an impure man, though such an one proclaims the

truth; nor does he ask the energies of a good man, if he desert or trifle with the Gospel of God. Jesus would not accept the homage of demons, and Paul was grieved when the Philippian Pythoness sang his praises, and uttered truth: "But," said he to the Galatians, "if I or an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." And in these words he gathers into a sentence the whole string of cautions and warnings which he had just uttered, and presents his thrilling demand on the Christian teacher for purity of doctrine and holiness of life. Let us take them in order. "Take heed to the *doctrine*."

(1) Let your teaching be *scriptural*. You are students of God's revealed Word. Let me, then, earnestly entreat you to lay the basis of all that you have to say upon the clearly ascertained revelations of Holy Scripture.

It will be very easy for you to become confused and perplexed if you are striving to perfect any philosophical scheme for reconciling the Divine purposes and the human free-will, for explaining "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," for reducing to logical form the doctrine of the God-head, for expounding the hidden reasons and essence of that atonement which is offered for human sin. However, you will not wander, and in the great multitude of cases you will not be confounded, if you set forth the earth-ward and man-directed side of these great facts as they are given in Holy Writ.

If you set Christ before your class, teaching your young friends to sit with you at His feet, to look into His face, to hear His voice, to feel His presence : if you make the Holy Scriptures, rather than abstruse metaphysical creeds, your guide in understanding Christ, then neither you nor your scholars will fail to think of Him as man and as God, as the most human of men, and the intensest revelation of all the power and grace of God, as the Saviour and Deliverer, the Patron and Priest of men, as the King and Lord of your Spirit, as the " Judge who will bring every secret thing to light," as " the Lamb in the midst of the throne."

However, let your doctrine be not only scriptural, as opposed to philosophical or theological methods of instruction, but let it be scriptural as distinguished from self-devised matter of instruction. Do not suppose that you can find within yourself better moral illustrations, or more comprehensive principles of action, than you will find within the sacred volume. It is often very inviting to wander along devious and aspiring paths of speculation, and to search elsewhere for the bases of religious truth, and comfort, and stimulus ; but the wisest heads and the largest hearts come back after long search to the Divine book itself, and say, ' The germs of all truth are here, the needs of all minds and the desires of all hearts may be satisfied here.'

The existence and vigour of the Christianity of the next generation depend upon the success and extent

of this scriptural knowledge. Oh, let me implore you, dear Christian friends, to do all that is within your reach to imbue the minds of the rising generation with a love, a reverence for, as well as a knowledge of Holy Scripture. Let them see that you are in profound earnest about it, and that you do honour to it. Explore its unfathomable deeps, roam through its fertile fields, dilate on its exceeding beauties, take the bread of life from the hands of Jesus, let it multiply in your hands for the behoof of all! Engrave its glorious words on the memories, stamp its broad promises on the softening hearts, that are about you. Hurl its denunciations against sin. Be content with its definitions of God. Understand the sweep and penetration of its morals. "Cry aloud! lift up your voice like a trumpet" against the sins that it denounces. Prepare for the heaven which it foreshadows!

(2) Take heed to your doctrine, that it be not only scriptural, but *comprehensive*. Do not rest satisfied with a truth because it is found in Holy Scripture, but discover for yourself whether there be not other truths, closely-related truths, in God's revelation, without which the truth in question cannot be understood. Do not be satisfied with the truth that merely meets your own views and fancy. It may be, that the truth which very much rebukes your "private interpretation" or taste, is more to the purpose, and quite as necessary to be known. I venture to implore you to give the same kind of prominence

to doctrine that the Holy Ghost has done in His revelation, and then you will not be wrong, whatever theologians may say. Believe me, nearly all the errors which have desolated the Church of God have arisen from this want of comprehensiveness, this exaggeration of some truths, this conference upon them of unwonted importance. There are those who have so exclusively dwelt on the Divine sovereignty and counsels, that they have lost sight of the responsibility and defiled the conscience of man. There are others who have so perpetually insisted on the freedom, the sovereignty, and the dignity of *man*, that they have virtually lost their God. There are those whose main notion of the Gospel is a pitiful lamentation over the rottenness of human nature; while, on the other hand, there are those who have dwelt so long on the benevolence and goodness of the Gospel, that they have forgotten the infinite pity and strange mercy which it proclaims. There are those who speak of the justice and government of God, until they have forgotten His Fatherhood; and perhaps at the present time many are in danger, in sickly sentimentalism, of forgetting that God must punish sin, and that His throne is based upon eternal righteousness. There are those who are so occupied with the humanity of Christ, that they have lost sight of His deity, and cannot trust His power to save. There are those who are so overpowered by His divinity, that they have lost the practical force of His brotherhood, and conferred His humanity on His mother, His sisters, and

brethren. There are those who take up some special view of faith, of the Church, of the Sacraments, of the world, of the latter days, so that, to hear them speak, one would suppose that God's revelation was confined to a metaphysical quibble, to the mode of administering an ordinance, or to some of the machinery of the final judgment. In all these things they "do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

(3) Take heed to the manner of the doctrine, that it be *connected and ordered upon some plan*, some prayerfully-considered purpose. Do not treat the Scriptures as a conjuring-book, nor open it at random, nor read it with carelessness; but endeavour to get at the meaning of a period, of a stage, of an epoch, of a division of God's revelations; or, if you will, pursue the scriptural teaching, on some great thrilling themes, from the beginning of the Bible to its close. Ask leading questions of Scripture, and it will answer you. "Take heed to the doctrine,"—do not expect the doctrine to take heed of you. "Meditate upon these things." Ponder them with a purpose, and it is amazing how light will burst forth from thick clouds, and help come in your extremity; how out of weakness you will be made strong; and how, becoming mighty in the Scriptures, you will silence and convince gainsayers.

(4) Take heed to your doctrine, that it is *appropriate* to the class of minds with which you have to deal. Paul spoke in Hebrew to the Jews, and

in Greek to the philosophers of Athens. He adopted one style when addressing the Orientalists of Ephesus, and another when reasoning with the prejudices of Roman Jews. The language of Jesus to His Apostles and to the multitude, to the solitary wanderer or nightly visitor, His mode of addressing the Sadducee and the lawyer, the Roman governor and the woman that was a sinner, all shew us His infinite power of adaptation, his multitudinousness, and that He is indeed the brother of all. And so the great Apostle was "all things to all men, that by all means he might save some." Do not expect to interest playful boys in philosophical problems, or hardworking girls with historical evidences. Remember that the Bible is "the boy's own book" as much as the man's guide to heaven. Oh, labour hard to find the way into the hearts of those who have already learned the art of resisting the claims of Jesus and defying the authority of God!

But I must not delay on this part of my subject, tempting as it is, because, my dear brethren, the doctrine, both in its matter and manner, may be unexceptionable,—it may be scriptural and comprehensive,—it may be well-ordered and appropriate; and yet, though you may have secured all this, you may have been neglecting one prime element in all success. You may have kept the vineyard of others, and your own vineyard you may have not kept. "Take heed," said the venerable Apostle to his son in the faith,—*"take heed unto THYSELF."*

We who are workers for God, students of truth, servants of the Church, teachers and pastors, watchers for souls, have a great work to do with ourselves: we have great temptations to resist, yet we are to be "patterns even to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Our own "profiting is to appear unto all;" we are not only to profit, but our profiting is to appear, and is to be manifest to all. There is an inward and outer self that we have to consider most resolutely and perseveringly. We may be earnest in our manner, but it is still more important that we be sincere in our spirit; we had better say less and do more, than do less and say more. If a minister's or teacher's life does not correspond with what he professes to teach, or what he is supposed to profess to teach, or with what the observing child knows that he ought to be; the teaching, the tears, the talk, will all be like so much idle chaff, which the wind driveth away.

Take heed to thyself, O man of God! Thou mayest deal with heavenly realities and divine truths until they are mere chess-men that thou art shifting over the board and fighting imaginary battles with. Thou mayest substitute the intellectual appreciation of the truth which thou hast discovered, for the spiritual reception of it into thy own heart. Thou mayest fail to cultivate thine own inner life, and allow evil thoughts to run riot within thee, while thou art busy with the religion of others, and talking much of salvation. Oh, take heed to thyself, lest by

thy "words or conversation" thou shouldst degrade that Gospel which is at stake in thy person! The whole style of thy deportment should truly refract the light that is in thy heart. There should be no abrupt and wretched transition between thy solemn words in the class-room and all thine other words. "Thy charity and thy spirit," the whole of thy temper, and the entire government of thy passions, should reveal that service which is perfect freedom. Is it possible that there should be a professed teacher of Christ's morals whose hands are trembling and whose head is aching from grievous or wicked excess, or that there are lips that can frame to utter the words of Jesus which have been defiled with slander, or impurity, or profanity,—that out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing? Is it possible that there should be watchers for souls whose "faith" is worthless, whose honour no man trusts, or whose "purity" no man believes in? Watchers, indeed! They are watchers for the devil, doing his work, spreading nets about the feet of children, and shedding innocent blood. Suicides, and murderers of souls, such men will "not perish alone in their iniquity."

Take heed to thyself, O man of God! and be on thy watch against all these things. Thou art not only to be free from the blame of others, and from the accusation of thy own conscience, but to be a pattern of purity and honour, of spirit and love, of word and conversation. Thou art to be a specimen of what a Christian ought to be, in the transactions

of daily life, at the innermost shrine of earthly affection, on the highways of the world, in the parlour and the committee-room, in journeys and at home, and with all classes with whom thou mayest come into contact. A pattern to BELIEVERS. Ordinary believers naturally look to those who teach for the deepest faith, and for the highest kind of life. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. A lamp is not covered by a bushel, but is placed on a candlestick, and gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Take heed to thyself: for the sake of the children who watch thine every movement,—for the sake of the Church which has entrusted its honour to thy keeping,—for the sake of the Christ whom thou professest to serve,—for the sake of that precious soul which may starve in the midst of plenty, and be lost while it pours forth tidings of salvation.

The inducements by which the Apostle urges this stirring appeal are comprehensive and inspiring: "in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and those that hear thee." My fellow-workers, there is one salvation for our hearers and for ourselves. The most powerful preacher, the most devoted teacher, the most distinguished apostle, the holiest martyr, must be saved by the same means as the most ignorant and guilty sinner to whom he speaks. There are no special passports to heaven, no short cuts, no side-ways, no reserved seats, no privileged admissions

there; a spiritual reputation on earth is no watchword at the gates of heaven.

However, patient perseverance in such godlike work is a way not only of securing the salvation of others, but our own salvation too. This taking heed to ourselves is indeed necessary in order that we should have any influence with those that hear us. This taking heed to the doctrine is utterly indispensable to our own salvation. Let us continue in them, and remember that when we thus seek the salvation of others, we are seeking our own.

Our own salvation, without the salvation of those that hear us, is a thought we can scarcely endure. Oh, may God in His mercy give each Christian worker in this place to say, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me!" After all, may we be saved from sin, from self, from wrath, from hell! Saved together,—saved through one another's prayers, and faith, and faithfulness,—and God in Christ shall receive the praise, to whom be all the glory now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

UNWEARIEDNESS IN WELL-DOING.

GALATIANS VI. 9.

Let us not be weary in well-doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

EVERY earnest worker is sometimes out of heart. The freest spirit is not unfrequently fettered by circumstances, and feels or fancies that an insurmountable barrier stops the way to the accomplishment of its cherished project. The brave man will sometimes turn back shame-faced and blanched with fear when stern duty, when solemn circumstance, when previously-expressed confidence ought to have summoned every energy he possessed, and quickened the pulse of his moral courage. I presume that not a few of us have at one time or another quailed under the influence of disappointment, and suffered the consequent deterioration of our moral nature. We have endeavoured to pre-arrange our plans, to measure our success, and to count upon certain results ; and we have risked our character and our good name upon

some scheme which has utterly miscarried, or some work which has proved a failure; and then, altogether discomfited, we have relinquished our purposes, and thrown down our work in disgust; at one time charging the blame on others, at another time on ourselves, we have been soured, irritable, and rebellious, unfit for present duty, unwilling to hope even for ultimate success. It is equally probable that we may have become suddenly aware of our own weakness and incompetence to do that which we had undertaken to do. Such a revelation is painful enough, and whether we are right or wrong in our judgment, it requires great patience and fortitude to govern our conduct rightly. Under this bitter conclusion the most prudent man is often in practical despair; the most Christian disciple is tempted by desponding thoughts to wish everything to be different from what it is, and to murmur not only against his own lot, but against the Providence and laws of God. Physical disease, moral weakness, natural indecision of character may have aggravated all these occasional trials of our courage and temper, but they have not exculpated us. They were Divine temptations which were intended to allure us to virtue and effort: we have, alas! made them temptations to sin; for at such seasons the demon of laziness has seized on us, has cramped our efforts, and bound us hand and foot with his cruel fetters. We have found it hard even to think and resolve; we have suffered this evil spirit to surround us with a network of silly excuses,

and to withdraw the languid blood from our feeble circulation. We have thrown the blame of our inactivity on everything rather than on the true cause, and have fainted in the midst of our way from sheer inanition. Ever attempting to predict definite results, we have attained nothing. Forgetting the great laws to which we are subjected, we have been hindered rather than aided by them. Wasting our strength in a combat with the irreversible laws and forces of nature, instead of trying to discover and utilize them, we have at length become weary and helpless, and have imagined ourselves the butt of the universe and the scorn of heaven. We shall endeavour to urge the powerful injunction of the text by several considerations.

Let us not be weary in well-doing in consequence of,—

I. The rivalry of other workers.

II. The mighty name by which we are called.

III. The insidious character of our temptations to weariness.

IV. The reward promised to patient labour.

First, the rivalry of other workers forbids weariness.

(1) The undying activity of the world. In this busy working world, the inactive, the disappointed, the weary, are soon trodden down and destroyed. If we cannot keep pace with the great crowd as it hurries on, we must be content to be trampled to death and ground into dust. There is no mercy for the half-hearted man: he is quickly jostled off the

race-course, or crushed to pieces upon it. When a worker has become weary, and can no longer hurry forward or labour at his calling, though his weariness be the result of hard labour, or the consequence of dire disease, or the companion of hoary hairs, the world pauses perhaps a moment to push him out of its way, chuckles at the vacant space, or released capital, closes over the circle that formed for a moment around him, and hurries on in its eager race.

(2) If we turn from the unwearying work of the busy world to contemplate the great power of evil, if we try to realize its presence, to separate it in thought from the world which it defiles and seeks to ruin, we are appalled by its ceaseless efforts to accomplish its deadly purpose. The pleasures that it poisons, the infected banquets which it spreads, the hests it can marshal at its bidding, the infinity of objects it can wrest to its own miserable purpose, assure us that the spirit and the designer of the whole is indomitable in his energy, and vast in his resources. We know not "the evil that there is on the earth." It is difficult to estimate adequately the virulence and multifariousness of the agency at the disposal of the prince of this world. He seeks to pervert all human affections into lusts, to transform the machinery by which man has with wondrous ingenuity contrived to economize strength, into the artillery with which he deals destruction on his victim. He debases and prostitutes all the

resources of civilization, all the conclusions of science, to the service of human passion and selfishness. The gaming-house, the stalls of 'Vanity Fair,' the strange woman, the drunkard's wretched home, the idol temple, are only the coarser forms in which he makes his onslaught upon human susceptibility, and weakness, and depravity. There are a thousand unseen agencies, a thousand miserable coalitions with the worst propensities of human nature, which sow their seed and reap their dire harvest. Whatever power can afford to rest, the power of evil never grows weary.

(3) The energies of goodness never rest nor take their ease. On all hands the numerous and combining ranks of the children of light are taking to them the whole armour of God, and going forth to do battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. There are the great principles which war with passion; the governments and physical force that discover and condemn overt crime; there is the stimulus which truth and holy example give to conscience, and the use which goodness and love can make of the fiery tongue of eloquence. There is the moral thunder-storm which breaks over the haunts of vice, and there are the innumerable channels which convey the water of life to perishing multitudes. There are the numerous institutions to alleviate human woe, and there are the millions of children who Sunday after Sunday are being taught the truth as it is in Jesus. There is all that is done in our pulpits

and by the teeming press, all that is accomplished from party spirit, but nevertheless against evil; all that even bigotry and intolerance do in opposition to vice and corruption. Who can dare to say that God's Church is asleep or weary of her work? It often gives courage to the Christian minister to think that he does not labour alone in this long great battle with sin; that his anxieties, fears, and prayers are not his alone. You come, dear brethren, to fight by the side of your minister in this stern conflict; you wrestle daily with the spirit of evil; you watch the progress of the enemy, and are ever consulting when and where to advance upon him; you are mighty in prayer, and you testify, many of you, by the eloquence of a holy and consistent life, against the insidious advances of our desperate foe.

The preacher of the good news of God is not alone in his work, for he is one of an innumerable company of God's servants of every name, all of whom are pledged to the extermination of evil from the universe; and he feels that were there no higher motive, even the common earthly emotion of rivalry might forbid inactivity, and say to every man who bears the vessels of the Lord, "Be not thou weary in well-doing."

Such an appeal may be made to an unworthy motive, but still there is power in an argument like this:—The world is active: the devil sleeps not; the emissaries of hell never cease to lay their soul-snares around. Thou art the servant of the living God, a

soldier in His great army : do not disgrace thy colours or thy calling, be not weary in thy great battle. The miser never spares himself, never pauses from grasping at his pelf. He rises early and sits up late, that he may increase his hoarded treasure. He never thinks that he has enough, and is not weary with his effort to amass perishable substance. Be not thou weary, then, oh Christian brother, in the pursuit of durable riches and righteousness ; never cease to add to thy heaven-stored wealth. The impure man never rests ; he wearies not of indulging his guilty passions. As you see his greedy earnestness, you might think that he had some splendid prospect before him which he was intent on securing ; but, judged by God's Word, he is only preparing himself for the everlasting flame, and is miserably intent on increasing to the utmost extent of his power the torture which awaits him. Consider the victims of falsehood and idolatry. Learn from the devotee of many a false god ; from the worshipper of Siva, who, drunk with opium, swings on the flesh-hook at some horrid festival, or prostrates himself before the advancing car of Juggernaut, making this revolting self-sacrifice to pacify the raging of a guilty conscience, or to gain the ephemeral applause of an ignorant mob ; even he is not weary with his work. See to it then, my brother, when thou art besought by the mercies of God to present thy body a living sacrifice on His altar, that thou art not outdone and put to shame by the earnestness and

perseverance of the slave of passion, or the votary of superstition.

II. The mighty name of 'Christian' combines many of the strongest arguments to unwearying service.

(1) The Christian owes his own salvation to unwearyed love and infinite sacrifice. The terms of man's reprieve are written in the precious blood of One who offered Himself without spot to God; who never paused in His work of love; who rested not until He was made perfect through inconceivable suffering. With reverence I say it, if He had grown weary ere His task was accomplished, if He had felt the cross too heavy to be borne, if He had flinched from enduring it, if the same mind had been in Him which often is in us, if He had refused to drink that awful cup that was grasped in His trembling hands, and had said, "The evil is too vast for Me to overcome, the agony too sharp for Me to endure;" then should we have been still in our sins, and the world would have been still unredeemed. We know all this; we rest our only hope of salvation from sin on the exhaustless, unwearyed love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot accept His Gospel without receiving into our innermost nature, as the highest conceivable idea of perfection, the ideal of patient, unrepining, long-continued endurance of aggravated temptation to pause in His work of mercy, and at the same time the ideal of complete victory over that temptation. If Christ is our Saviour, we hail this

characteristic as the highest manifestation to us of our God. We cannot say from the depth of our heart, "Jesus died for me," without appreciating as infinitely blessed and God-like the thing which He did, and the way in which He did it. This glorious vow should be taken by those who draw their hope and inspiration from the cross of Jesus Christ. "We will, if God help us, never be weary in well-doing."

(2) Christians are the pledged disciples of the Great Worker in this field of holy exertion. "I *must* work," said Jesus, "the works of Him that sent Me while it is day." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Now we have taken Him as our Master and Lord; we profess to sit at His feet, and to have caught His Spirit; we ask to drink into His deep love; we agree to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him; we touch our lips to the brim of the bitter cup that He drained; we have been taught to desire some "fellowship even in His sufferings." The atonement is not accepted by us until we know by a deep experience something of Christ's hatred to sin, and His agony from its near approach. Just as we are His disciples, we do seek to be "conformed to His death," and even profess to know something of "the power of His resurrection." He honours us by saying, 'My enemies are your enemies, My work is your work. Follow Me in my struggle against sin, help Me to wrestle against the power of darkness, and tread down Satan under your feet. I have died for you, that you may live for Me. Be not

weary at the outset. I have an eternity of work for you to do—press fairly into the thick of the fight, and conquer though you die.’

(3) Christ Himself lives and works within the Christian by the power of His Spirit. His divine and exhaustless energy did not come to an end upon the Cross. From that time forward the Eternal Word no longer vouchsafed to be incarnate in one solitary human soul, but to be the divine life of a multitude whom no man can number. He began thenceforward a diviner, more energetic operation. You by faith are crucified with Him; nevertheless you live, yet it is not you, but Christ who liveth in you. Christ is formed within you; He will co-operate with every holy desire that you feel; He will invigorate every effort of every member of His body. If you would not be a withered hand hanging uselessly beside that mystical body; if you would not disgrace your high calling of God; if you would not cut away the evidence of your union with Christ; if you would not be yourself cast forth to the burning as a fruitless branch,—then, be not weary in well-doing. By indolence, or forgetfulness of this genuine characteristic of the Christian, you may quench the Spirit of your Master, and resist the Life of God, which is always striving for expression through your life.

III. Further incentives to perseverance may be found in the peculiar and insidious character of the temptations to which well-doing is exposed.

(1) The man who is resolved to ruin himself has the evil propensities of his fallen nature to help him, the bad passions that prowl at will over his soul, all on his side. His sinful desires hound him on, his greedy lusts silence his conscience; his intellect only mocks at his folly. The faculty of reason has shewn itself unable, when left to its own powers, to deliver man from the bondage of sin; and instead of checking the progress of the evil-doer, it may be suborned to palliate the excess, and dexterously to throw the blame upon another. The man who is doing evil has much to help him in the corruption of his nature, in the solicitations of the flesh, in the nearness of the rewards of sin; for all these prompt him to the fatal exertion, and quicken his step in the destruction of his soul. On the other hand, "well-doing" exacts a perpetual conflict with the evil tendencies of our nature. To do well is to fight the good fight of faith, to stir up the soul to lay hold on God, to climb the steep ascent, to turn back from the broad ways of sin and death, and drag the load of flesh up the toilsome eminence. The divine life that we have to live is a sore battle against flesh and blood, and hence the danger of weariness. There are some men who have withstood God their Father for years; but they are not wearied by His goodness, and at last they find it easy to insult God, to deride Christ, to weave crowns of thorns for His brow, to do despite to the Spirit of Grace. Alas for us! we have all trifled with His goodness, and thus

know well what it is, and how it is possible, for a man at length to be unwearied by, because utterly deaf to, either the warnings or invitations of God. Here is the contrast between the man who is trying to crucify the world and the man who persists in crucifying Christ. The latter can do his awful work carelessly, thoughtlessly, merrily; but he who has to put the thorny crown on the brow of the world, to drive the nails into its defiled hands, to thrust the spear into its hardened heart, by no means finds that the world is led as a lamb to the slaughter. The old world resists as with oaths and curses, and tries to overcome him in the strife, and often gains a temporary victory. The Christian has a persevering enemy to slay. It is one armed to the teeth, but one who is prepared with a thousand stratagems, and is ever ready to make profuse promises of honour and reward if he will relinquish his resolve to gain the victory. Under the peril of this temptation he has perpetual need for vigilance, and prayer, and effort, and often to hear the injunction, "Be not weary in well-doing."

The well-doing here referred to may with equal propriety include the great work of God in the world, the sowing of the seed of the kingdom, the earnest effort of men who are striving to pour in the light of truth on the darkness of human nature, to drive back the powers of evil to their own dwelling-place, or to reclaim from the wilderness a vineyard for the Lord of Hosts. Verily we have abundance

of encouragement to do this work; we have Divine promise and Divine power on our side, and we must never despair of success. But we know that the heart will relapse into darkness as soon as the light is withdrawn. We know that the devil will issue forth again, as soon as his bonds are relaxed. We know that the fruitful field will become a wilderness, and the vine bring forth wild grapes as soon as the uncultivated nature of man is left to itself. Alas! there is the irreclaimable waste all around, which is either weedy and barren, or else covered over with noxious growths, and poisonous, though fragrant, flowers. The seeds of evil things come wafted on the wings of all the winds, and while men sleep the enemy sows tares. The garden of the sluggard is soon choked with every rank growth and worthless weed, so that the activity of evil, and the advantage at which it is placed, are ever sounding in our ears the exhortation, "Be not weary in well-doing."

(2) Another of the hindrances to which "well-doing" of this kind is exposed, is the tendency of our machinery to wear out, and our own disposition not unfrequently to hurry it off the field. Our ways of doing good may often be antiquated and cumbrous. A mass of useless lumber, in the shape of old instruments, may infest the Church of God, and we perhaps often feel that nothing can be done without removing such incumbrances. The danger on this head is twofold. It may be that the conservative element in the Church will say, 'Unless you do good

in the old appointed way, you shall not do it at all; unless you fight in armour that has been consecrated by the use of ages, you shall **not** fight in our ranks;’ and thus baffled, the stripling, forbidden to **work in** his own way, is in danger of growing careless, indifferent, and weary. On the other hand, there is danger lest the element of change and innovation should be abused into seeking alteration only for its own sake, and lest the worker should become more anxious to try the effect of some new scheme, than to prosecute the work which has been given him to do. Now, it may be, on the one hand, that by reason of our own carelessness, our implements have become powerless, and that we are wilfully disposed to charge upon them the fault of which we are ourselves guilty; or, on the other hand, that we are irritated and disheartened by what we may regard as a want of appreciation of our magnificent plans: let us then take the warning of the Apostle to ourselves, and remember that he is speaking to us.

(3) There is temptation to weariness in “well-doing” from the very number of methods by which it may be pursued. To one Christian, personal duties towards the ignorant and wretched at his own door seem all-important, and he expends much time, and money, and feeling on the subject; another yields to those drawings of holy sympathy which make him agonize for the salvation of the heathen world. To one the circulation of God’s Word throughout the globe, to another the peculiar claims of God’s ancient

people; to one the rescue of the drunkard, to another the higher departments of education, may appear the most pressing object of Christian sympathy and effort. These and many other modes of well-doing put in their plea to those of you who are seeking to glorify God. But there are some among you who have no special object of benevolence, no definite work that you set yourselves to do. You do not feel intensely about any one of these objects; and if you give of your substance to promote them, you do it niggardly, peevishly, or prayerlessly. Let the words of the Apostle summon you to some holy service. Be earnest at least about some one good work. Be on fire about some one mode of usefulness. Give yourself with devotedness and self-sacrifice to one, if you do but smile upon all the rest, and "be not weary in well-doing."

IV. Let us, in conclusion, consider the reason which the Apostle urges for our observance of this injunction. It rests on the great law of all God's dealings—the reward of patient labour. "Ye shall reap if ye faint not." It might be enough for us to do the right thing whether appreciable results should follow or not. We might have been entirely left to the influence of precept and principle—we might have been schooled into the cheerful surrender of our will to the Divine will, without being able to detect any of the advantages which should accrue from it. Well-doing might have been supposed to carry with it its own reward. "Sowing to the Spirit" might

have been considered a sufficient privilege, and we might have been presented with no stronger incentive to persevering effort than the command of our Master, and the privilege of sharing in His work. He might have said, 'Faint not nor be discouraged, inasmuch as your work is God's work, and your joy is the joy of Christ.' But God has placed us in a world, and given us material and instruments which obey certain great laws, which must act in obedience to those laws, and beyond the line and scope of which it is impossible for them or us to travel. Certain conduct secures certain results. There is an absolute limit placed by Providence and Nature to the kind of result which will follow the presence of particular causes. If a man does not sow, he cannot reap. If he does not thus put Nature to the proof, he must remain with his barren land and his unproductive capital wasting before his eyes. So in the great world of human nature: if a man sows to the flesh, if he is intent on fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, maddening his passions and enslaving his will, he must reap the natural consequences—ruin and death; and if a man sows to the Spirit, corresponding results will follow. He bears precious seed; he sows beside all waters: he may weep as he goes forth to scatter it, but the seed cannot be lost; the diligent persevering effort cannot be ineffectual; it will be seen after many days. In all the well-doing of the Christian, in all the toil of the earnest worker for God, there is alliance with the

power of the Holy Spirit, and with the purposes of God; and it would seem that the sovereignty of God has included the labours of man in its own far-reaching penetration. God does not arbitrarily decree that certain plots of land shall be cultivated, whether men are there to till the ground and sow the seed, or not. He places Adam in the garden, and bids him prepare the soil and cast in the seed; bids him root out the tare, and keep off the ever-advancing region of uncultivation. Neither does He ordain that the dark field of the human heart, prone as it is to every evil thing, infested with the noxious weed and unclean and creeping thing, should suddenly become, without human toil, like a well-ordered garden. He has given His Church much work to do. He has told it to be in earnest, resting on His promise. He has bidden it not to be weary in well-doing, for in due season it shall reap if it faint not.

If we grow weary, if we faint and give up the work, if we cease to put forth our effort, if we desert the field, there are many disposed to take up the work which we have left undone, and to proceed earnestly and successfully with it. While we faint and fear, there are thorns preparing to spread their rank and noxious growth around our fragile seedling, there are fowls of heaven eager to devour it. Away with the motives and the excuses which palliate our indolence, and conceal the sinfulness of our lethargy! We may have been out of heart; then let us resolve,

by God's grace, to be "strong and very courageous" in the future span of our life-work. We may have done our work very carelessly and been depressed with our small amount of success; we may even have been contending against the great laws of Nature and Providence, rather than struggling to rise into harmony with them; let us then draw fresh inspiration from the cross of our Lord, which reveals at one and the same moment the evil that there is in the heart of man, and the abundance of love and power and righteousness that there is in the heart of God; and hailing the sight of evil as that with which our Father would have us contend, let us, like good soldiers who shout for joy at the signal for immediate engagement, consecrate ourselves afresh to His work, and resolve to be faithful to Him, to our own high vocation, and to His sovereign and changeless purpose; and then in *due season* we shall gain our victory and His, and we shall reap our harvest. The months before the ingathering may often seem long and wearisome, and verily be heart-breaking things, but God's "*seasons*" are not always measurable by our forecastings, even though the harvest is pledged by His oath and His promise. We shall reap the growth effectuated by His Holy Spirit, though we may not always understand the nature of the gracious sheaves that we are bringing in our bosom. We cannot calculate the hour nor the nature of our triumph, but we know that the Word of God standeth sure, and that the due season draweth nigh. It is true we may fail of

reward if we faint before that season opens on us. But, beloved, you are not of those who faint or draw back. It is the coward who is weary of his life-battle. It is the sluggard who is weary at the seed-time. It is the rebel who is weary of obedience. It is the traitor who is weary of service done to a good Master. It is the prodigal who is weary of his Father's love, and you are "the members of Christ, the children of God, the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

I earnestly trust that you are conscious of the heavenly life; that you are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ;" that you have risen up from the narrowness of human thought to the grandeur of Divine purpose; that you have accepted the summons to holy work; that the grace of God is teaching you the delights of holy service, the blessedness of communion with Christ in His sorrows, His hopes, His triumph. You have been learners in the school of patience, you have been resting in the Lord, and hoping in Him and delighting in Him. However great your temptations, you must never give way to weariness. In due season you shall reap if you faint not.

SERMON XVIII.

FAITHFULNESS UNTO DEATH.*

REV. II. 10.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

THE entire passage of Holy Scripture from which I have chosen these few words forms the very sanctuary of revelation. The Elder Brother, claiming for Himself the unlimited power of the Spirit, and all the attributes of Deity, having finished His mediatorial work and "brought in an everlasting righteousness," being hidden in the light of God and having returned to the bosom of the Eternal Father, with all the woes of the world and all the aspirations of the Church throbbing in His heart, chose, ere His beloved Apostle had passed away from earth and was once more sheltered in His love, to address him in words which should never cease to console, instruct, and warn His Church. The language of the Apostle, like an over-smitten harp-string, shivers, if it does not snap with his effort to describe the impression that was

* This Sermon was preached at the dedication of a friend to foreign missionary service at Shanghai.

made upon his mind by the appearance and message of the glorified humanity of Jesus. The vision he beheld of the majesty and might, the holiness and grace of "the Prince of the kings of the earth—the beginning of the creation of God," whose "face was as the sun shineth in his strength," and whose voice was "as the sound of many waters," was so dazzling and wonderful, that St. John, who had once leaned in loving trust on the bosom of Jesus, now "fell at His feet as dead." It was only when the right hand of the Great Physician touched him that he awoke from his swoon of fear and great amaze. The message given him to utter is explicit and direct, yet his words suggest in an almost strained hyperbole the priestly functions and the royal honours of his Lord. In his raptured imagination, at one moment he sees Him stand at the gate of Paradise to guard "the way of the tree of life;" the next, He fills the holy place of the celestial temple with His glory, and dispenses "the hidden manna" to His priest-like followers. First, He is the victor over death, and the great foe of sin; and then all that was ever meant by 'the key of David' is 'entrusted to him,' and 'the door' into the invisible world, and 'the door' into the spiritual kingdom—the New Jerusalem—and the way into man's heart, are alike put at His disposal. "He opens, and no man shuts; He shuts, and no man opens." His knowledge is infinite, and His power eternal. But over and above all other characteristics, binding them indeed into

a glorious unity, making them all more full of meaning, is His brotherly love, and His profound and awful interest in all the successes, the trials, and the imperfections of His people. He searches every secret thing, every dishonest feeling, every treacherous wish; He counts the names of those that were "ready to die," and loathes the lukewarmness that was worse than death. His largest sympathy is reserved for suffering faithfulness. He discovers the "few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments." He discerns the bitterness of the cup that was handed to His faithful servant in Smyrna. The boisterous zeal of the Church at Ephesus cannot cover from His eye the forgetfulness of its first love; nor can the fearful perils and sore temptations of the Church at Pergamos furnish an excuse for sinful compromise. Thus amid the gorgeous imagery of Oriental vision we see the Eye that is as a flame of fire, the Judge of every secret thought, the Master who is profoundly acquainted with every detail of our work, our temptation, or our fear.

Ministers of the Gospel and missionaries of the Cross are often tempted to accept the judgment of their fellow-Christians upon themselves, to appropriate the praises sometimes lavished upon their office, or the method of its discharge; to dwell on the peculiar pledges that have been offered for their own sincerity and earnestness, as though they accurately set forth the state of the case. There is much in their office which is calculated to flatter the secret

Pride of their hearts. The greatness of the work, the associations of excellence and honour that have been connected with it, the rays of glory that hover round the brow of the missionary, the esteem in which his enterprise is justly held by the Christian Church, and the distinction conferred on the successful missionary more than on those who are pursuing silent, unobserved Christian work at home; all these are circumstances which, inasmuch as they create temptations from which the only shield is the love and righteousness, the sympathy and spirit of the Master, make it peculiarly desirable that we should turn away from human opinions to the judgment of Christ and the tribunal of heaven. To what portion of Holy Scripture may we revert with deeper reverence than to that which reveals the certainty of His inspection, the solemnity of His judgments, the awfulness of His threatenings, and the glory of His promises? It is not necessary to determine the precise ecclesiastical rank of the 'Angels' of the Seven Churches; whether they were presbyters or bishops in the modern acceptance of the terms, it is clear that Christ regards them as His servants, messengers, and representatives. Our Lord even makes the happiness of the Church to be dependent on the integrity and faithfulness of the man who bears that office, and He ranks His earthly servants with His heavenly messengers. He includes the humble pastor and the glorious seraph under the same title, and submits them to the same government. The duties

of the Christian pastor and missionary may be more circumscribed, their worship less ardent and pure than that which circles the eternal throne, but "the innumerable company of angels" does not despise the humble fellowship of service rendered by those whom their Lord is not ashamed to call His brethren. "Angels He calls them; be their strife to lead on earth an angel's life." The responsibilities of bearing the commission of the Master are very onerous and solemn. The unfaithfulness of the angel is visited not only on himself, but on the Church. His indifference, or insincerity, or hardness of heart, or compromise with idolatry and sin, proves infectious and disastrous to all around him; and the Redeemer accumulates epithets to shew how wide-spread will be the ruin, how terrible the consequences, if the star in His right hand should fall, like Lucifer, from that heaven.

It is impossible to exaggerate the responsibilities of one who essays to become a messenger and apostle of Christ. In fact, whatever the office be which a man seeks to fill, he must be prepared to encounter the anxieties which are involved in the discharge of its duties. It is impossible to gain the soldier's reputation and avoid his hairbreadth escapes and constant dangers. No man anticipates the statesman's laurels and expects at the same time domestic peace, and the charms of quiet, rural repose. If a man aspires to the honour of representing some great sovereign in a congress of nations, he knows that the

interests of thousands may be compromised or endangered even by his lightest word. Surely no less responsibility is involved in the functions of the man who hopes to sustain the solemn position of 'the angel,' or the messenger of Christ to His Church. As a matter of course, such a man anticipates suffering and anxiety; he must expect at times the bitter grief of having run in vain, and laboured in vain; he must anticipate the agonies of doubt lest he should have obscured or travestied his master's message, lest all the worst characteristics of his own religious experience and inner life should be repeated and exaggerated in the life and experience of those to whom he ministers; lest Christ should, after all, be more compromised than represented in the feeble service which he tries to render to Him.

It is well sometimes to strip these Apostolic Churches of the poetry which the haze of centuries has thrown around them, and to look below the nimbus which our faith and reverence have wreathed about the brows of these early confessors. It is desirable that we should see how much of flesh and blood and common-place life did lie under all the proceedings of the Christians of the first century; it is well to discover the many points where our feelings and fears, our mistakes and jealousies, our shortcomings and sins, our mixture of motives, our ordinary virtues, and even our unspiritual character do very strongly resemble what we learn of these fathers and founders of the Church. It is desirable

for us sometimes to scrutinize the actual features of the Church of Christ as the Apostles left it, to inquire into the life that was lived by those first converts from heathenism, and to estimate the heroism of the first preachers of the Word of God in Asia. It is well to ask what was the character of the practical Christianity that has converted the world, what we should have seen if we had faced it in those cities of pro-consular Asia, even while the mighty spirit of John was still lingering upon the earth, and the Holy One still stood within the cloud-veils of Patmos. Would it have been anything essentially different from that which modern missionaries now see in India and in China? Let us thread the streets of Ephesus, the abode of learned leisure and wild superstition, and search out the school of Tyrannus, or the disused Jewish synagogue in which the troubled Church of Nazarenes has met for worship. One thing will be very obvious as we view this little Christian assembly, that as yet the Christian faith has produced no deep effect upon the masses of the people. Heathenism still has the wealth, the fashion, and the philosophy. All the shops in the principal bazaars, the façades of the theatre and of the pro-consular palace, are still decorated with symbols of heathen worship, and processions of pilgrims from all parts of the world are ever pouring in to worship at the shrine of the 'Great Goddess Diana.' Let us glance at the assembly; it consists, for the most part, of the poor. There are few of the noble, or the wealthy; not many

pundits, nor priests, nor men of high caste; while the Roman governor and his suite are certainly innocent enough of knowing anything about Christianity. In the estimation of far-sighted, long-headed men of the world, these Christians are guilty of a fanatic morality, and the worship of nothing that the vulgar eye could see or comprehend. They are setting forth strange gods, and with sacrilegious hands are attacking the worship, the temples, the institutions, and traditions of antiquity. To compare Christianity, or its influence, or its promises, with the mighty myths and gorgeous worship of the immortal gods, was considered, by hundreds of men who were as clever as the town-clerk of Ephesus, a simple absurdity. The Christian Church was even less conspicuous at Smyrna than at Ephesus; there it probably worshipped in some cave by the sea-shore, and consisted of a few sailors and workmen who were poor, unknown, and without influence. At Laodicea alone we may conjecture the presence of wealth and respectability, and a splendid erection, beautiful as one of their own Grecian temples, in which worshippers who were increased with goods and had need of nothing, were adorned according to the fashions of the day, in flowing robes of finest linen, girded with golden chains, and fragrant with Oriental perfumes, and were complacently saying to themselves, 'Our new and holy religion is doing wonders here, is commanding respect and receiving homage.' We know what Jesus thought of the poverty-stricken Smyrneses,

and of the prosperous Laodiceans. Neither in the one nor the other was it very conspicuous that the fulcrum had been discovered by which the Saviour was going to move the world. In both these and in other of the sister Churches there was the presence of certain dangerous moral heresy. It was a miserable effort to cloke licentiousness with the gospel of Christ. The new converts needed the closest watching, lest they should abuse the grace of God, mistake the purpose of their redemption, and be ignorant of the Spirit which they had professedly received; in fact, lest they should forget that they were purged from their old sins. We see even in Apostolic times the germs of the fearful forms of heresy and speculation which harassed the Church for two hundred years. Heathenism was then, as now, eagerly seizing some of the ideas of Christianity and perverting them to its own use, and even making them the palliations of gross cruelty and licentiousness. These unnatural combinations were then, as they now are, often too conspicuous, and actually made more appearance than the quiet humble work of that kingdom which is within men; so that the partially-informed critic has often said, 'Here is your Christianity! This is the result of your missions!'

The social relations of heathendom between master and slave, husband and wife, parents and children, presented in Apostolic times almost insuperable barriers to success. The peoples were, moreover, always on the verge of some great political change, which

might entirely upset all Christian work. The mighty spiritual change in society which they anticipated for the world, lay afar off, beyond the utmost range of their lives. Let us look at the angels, the ministers, the missionaries of Christ and His Church, who were presiding over these infant communities. There is nothing to shew that they were men of colossal abilities, or transcendent excellence. They were average in their moral tone, and in their spiritual life and power of service. There was nothing so magnificent as the zeal of Martyn, the perseverance of Livingstone, the saintly power of Brainerd; but it was by means of such men as these that the Christianity of the first century became the salvation of the world. It was God's work and God's way. He chose the weak things of the world and of the Church to confound the things that were mighty. It was less than seventy years after the ascension of Jesus when we obtain this bird's-eye view of the Church, its organs, elements, and prospects; and comparing these with the work of the last seventy years, since the idea of Protestant missions first took possession of the Church of Christ, I think we have reason to take heart and hope from the comparison. I can, indeed, imagine a missionary beginning his work in a heathen land, with his heart overflowing with strong emotion, for which he has no adequate scope. A few children, a convert from some neighbouring station, an unsatisfactory servant or two, or a group of curious listeners, constitute the merest

nucleus of a Christian community. 'Is this,' he is disposed to say, 'the work that I have travelled ten thousand miles to do? Is nothing more than this to be anticipated?' Under certain dispiriting circumstances he is ready to wring his hands and exclaim with tears, 'O God, why hast Thou made me thus? Oh! that I now might die; I am no better than my fathers!' But when the angel's song has called upon him to ^R rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for Him," he sees much to encourage him, he finds that prophets of the Lord, angels of Christ, heralds of great change, and harbingers of glorious revolutions in the history of man, have been in precisely the same condition, have always been lonely men pressing along through the wilderness, or crowning with bleeding feet the tops of mountains, to shew the direction which the great high-road of the nations would eventually take. He sees the angels of the Churches, to whom the Lord Himself poured out His throbbing heart, in similar circumstances, and combating with the same difficulties. He gains perhaps a glimpse of the Saviour of the world in the very climax of His benevolence, His righteousness, His sacrifice, His heroism, His manifestation of God, awfully and solemnly ALONE. He knows that his Master was surrounded by circumstances in which not only had Judas betrayed him, Peter denied Him, His own brothers refused to believe in Him; in which Lazarus and Jairus, Nicodemus and Zacchæus had held their peace at His

cries, but even His beloved John, and James the first of His martyrs, had forsaken Him and fled, and God Himself had seemed to hide His face from His beloved Son. Yet how sublime His consciousness of His own power,—“I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me!” “Thou sayest that I am a king; for this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

Yes, there is a grand brotherhood in the disappointments of holy service. There are glorious hopes in the work that bears the message of Christ into the heart of the Ephesus, the Smyrna, or Thyatira of the East. And the Spirit of Christ is ever addressing words of special warning and encouragement to those who, like stars in His right hand, are shedding on a dark world some rays from the light of His presence.

There is peculiar consolation addressed by the risen Lord to “the angel of the Church at Smyrna.” He was a man whom no one praised for his great talent, for his brilliant accomplishments, for his measure of splendid spiritual gifts. He had the power of suffering for the name of Christ. He could bear a great deal and be silent. He could pass through the fires and not succumb to their fury. He could resist temptation, and face the hostility of the world, and dismiss fear in the hour of mortal terror. His was moral greatness rather than spiritual acquire-

ment. His apostolic succession was purity of heart, not ceremonial exactitude; it was the spirit of Apostles and of the Master of Apostles. There is special consolation vouchsafed to this man, and, as it seems to me, to every such man. Christ declares the extent of His own sympathy towards him. 'I know thy tribulation, and however bitter thy cup, however dark thy prison, however wretched thy lot, however depressed thy heart, I know all. Do not think that there are complications of disappointment which I cannot unwind, or that there are depths of sorrow which I do not fathom. I know thy tribulation.' Unspeakable consolation this to the suffering man, to the lonely worker; to the far-off missionary, to the uncanonized, unknown martyr; to every quiet, earnest, simple-minded servant of God—that Jesus knows and sees, and can sympathize in all the sorrow that He has given His disciple to bear.

The consolation thus offered most emphatically reveals the great secret of securing Divine approbation—"Be faithful."

Faithfulness is the main distinction of the noblest and best of all these angels of Christ's Church. The high moral excellence of honourably discharging the duties which were assigned to them, is obviously made by our Lord the great principle and test of acceptable service. To him who had received five talents, and had doubled the five that had been entrusted to him, to the servant who had received

two talents, and had doubled the two that had been left with him, the Lord exclaimed, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things." It was not the extent of the talent, the breadth of the trust, the brilliance of the rich bestowment, but the thoroughness, the honesty, the sincerity, the uprightness with which that talent which had been entrusted to him had been put to service. It is Christ's noblest and highest benediction, His greatest praise to say, "Thou hast been faithful." Heaven will burst with jubilation upon our ear if these words are addressed to us. Let Christ say, 'My servants, you have been true to Me; true to what you knew, felt, hoped, and were able to do;' and He will bring all heaven with Him in such award. Before that time shall come He stimulates His noblest servant, and prepares the martyr for his crown of life by these exhaustless words, "Be faithful."

I humbly venture to suggest to all missionaries, and especially to my beloved brother who is about to commence his great work in China, that these words of our Master mean,—

I. Faithfulness to the human heart.

I use this language because I am satisfied that we sometimes make mistakes by not listening to what our hearts tell us about our fellow-men. "Thanks to the human heart, by which we live; thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears." But when under the power of conscience, in the hard gripe of logic, and amid the unyielding dicta of our theological

dogmas, we are often in danger of forgetting some of the most fundamental facts of human nature which are witnessed to us by our "heart of hearts."

Let me say to you, my beloved brother, 'Your heart will often tell you, when you are dealing with the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, or Confucianist, that there is a great deal of truth and goodness at the heart of these men; that there is what you call, in defiance of theology, goodnature and kindness; that there is considerable development given to what is, in our country, described by even a wider name than Christianity—I mean humanity. You will find that men are even better than their religions; a thing, by the way, which can never be said of Christians; that there is filial reverence, and brotherly love, and patriotism, and care for the infirm and destitute; that there is, in fact, much recognition of the great moral laws, to which your own reason perpetually aspires. Be faithful, then, to what your heart teaches you, what your simple humanity may reveal of brotherly feeling and of the common ground that you and they occupy together. Endeavour to find out what is really good in the Chinaman, and what are those eternal principles which he has not, with all his pride, materialism, and selfishness, contrived to conceal or obliterate. God is striving with China, and has been for all these thousands of years. Do not suppose that *you* take with you the Divine Being. He is there before you, in every heathen's soul, in every throb of conscience, in every laudable

emotion, in every glimpse of truth, in every pre-disposition and susceptibility for the revelation of heaven, in all the structure and facilities of that marvellous language which He has fashioned for their thinking powers, in all the stupendous march of His providence, and in the wages of sin that He has imposed upon transgressors. Christ is there; the Light which lighteth every man; the Word that has been made flesh, and that has come into the world, is there now, in China, as He was in the heart of many an ancient sage; as we know Him to have been striving with Balaam and Eliphaz, as well as with Moses and Job, before He came in the flesh. That coming in the flesh has not limited, but extended the sphere of His spiritual work. Endeavour to discover your Master. Your heart will tell you, more than any rules of logic, more than any human instructions, where He is working. Discover and use the leverage of good that there is in the heart of these men, and be faithful to this talent of judgment that God has given you.'

II. These words mean faithfulness to the conscience.

It may be dangerous to deafen the ear to the voice of our common human nature; to be blinded by theology or criticism to the proof that God is at work within the soul of man, irrespective of Church or creed. It would be still more perilous "to call evil good, and good evil;" to hail that as good which is not good, but evil; to become indifferent to the systematic violation of God's eternal laws; to feel

creeping over the soul that chill latitudinarianism about religious truth, which affects every class of Chinese society; to become personally damaged by the materialism of the world that will be surely round about you there. Even in this country, it is hard work to resist the worship of mammon, the secularism of daily life, and the growing influence of the world. It is true that there are a thousand voices at one's side, all hurling defiance at "the prince of this world," and denouncing the tyranny of sense and fashion; yet how difficult it is not to "follow a multitude to do evil," how hard to swim against the tide, stream, and wind, and to hold one's ground against the laughter and sneers and cynicism of an unsympathizing crowd! How much courage does it require to triumph over one's native cowardice, to fight under the banner of derided conscience against a world in arms; to be faithful to conscience while the world is stigmatizing such faithfulness as morbid fanaticism, and drowning with ignorant clamour its much-insulted voice!

If *we* find it difficult in England to be faithful to conscience, with so much to strengthen us in the conflict, and so many to fight at our side, in a country where every day, and more than ever, society and the world, the religious bigot and the arbiter of public opinion, all agree to revere conscientious convictions, and to protect even the innocent enthusiast, who is believed to be listening to this inward voice; how much more difficult will it be for you to resist

such influence when you stand externally alone, like a sentinel on some distant outpost in a half-conquered country, where little honour will be paid to your conscience, and few found to sympathize in your notions of right; when convenience would dictate your ease, and love of peace suggest some more appropriate season than the present for declaring God's truth or denouncing evil!

It is easy to find excuses for sloth and silence even in this country—such as the conviction of not having the needed tact to rebuke sin, or the right opportunity for appealing to the eternal laws—but as a Christian missionary in China you will be placed in circumstances where your whole life must be a testimony, your every action an appeal to God, your daily business a proclamation of dissent from all around you, and a maintenance of the position which God has called you to occupy. Heathen society is as the movement of a mighty wheel; you may make little progress in trying to stop it, but if you cease the effort it will crush you. Under these circumstances, there is nothing more encouraging than the words of my text, even the words of the Lord, “I know thy tribulation;” “Be faithful.” You may desire greater powers of utterance, better opportunities of service; you may anticipate the occurrence of these when you shall have emerged from your study, and the instructions of your Pundit, but throughout “be faithful” to conscience.

There is much to be done by a life which obvi-

ously asserts such recognition of the paramount claims of the unseen and eternal Presence, by a life of sacrifice and submission to the will of God. Oh, the exhaustless meaning of these words, "He that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it!" and of these, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone!" The spirit that overcomes the world is the spirit of Christ. It is only when we arm the soul with the same mind that was in Him, only when we take up the cross to follow Him even to Calvary, and there to suffer with Him, that we can gain the victory. It is a glorious fellowship to be with Him in His sufferings, to secure something like a conformity with His spirit, and a burial and baptism into His death. He knows how steep is the climb to this elevation; how hard it is to trample upon the head of the serpent; how, in beating down Satan under our feet, we shall be bruised in the heel of our nature. But He has promised victory to him that overcometh.

III. Faithfulness to your Master and His Word, under all circumstances.

There are two or three considerations which may indicate the sources of help that are available to the Chinese missionary, and may be of interest to all who sympathize in his work.

(1) The Chinaman—whatever be his creed, or whichever of four creeds that are more or less current in that country be his profession—has universally the notion of a Master, and of the written word of

that Master. You have not to convey to the Chinese the idea of a Divine Teacher; he has that notion already deeply engraven on his mind. He believes in Sages, great, wise, much-suffering men, whose words are as refined gold, the law of whose mouth is better than thousands of gold and silver. He knows how to bow down with reverence to the commands of men uttered even thousands of years ago, and touching the minutest action of his daily life. Again, you have not to create in his mind an idea of a *Bible*. The Confucianist has his sacred classics; the Buddhist has his *Sutras*, or discourses of Buddha; the Taouist has his celebrated and venerable *Law of the Way and of Virtue*; and those Moslems who are to be found in Northern China have their *Koran*, and to these books they severally appeal with unhesitating confidence. Though the basis of their reverence differs widely from that upon which the Christian places his dependence; though the three specifically Chinese religions do not, I believe, speak of these productions as divinely inspired, in consequence of their obscure and shadowy notions of the Divine Being; yet, practically speaking, the reverence which the Chinese feel for those venerable books is pitted against our reverence for Holy Scripture. Your work will be a comparison of Masters, a comparison of Bibles. Be faithful to your Master and His Word. How vast the responsibility, so to act that He shall not suffer by any concession of His claims, yet so to preach His truth as to meet necessities which are revealed, but

not satisfied, in these hoary religions, the needs which are acknowledged, but not appeased, in any of them! Christ is to you so much more than a Master, so much more than a Teacher, and more than an example, that you will be anxious to set Him forth in all His powers to soothe and to redeem, as well as to command and to teach. Be faithful to Him. Let no Chinaman whom you can influence be able to charge you, when you stand together at His bar—when Confucius and Laotse, and Gautama and Mohammed will stand there too with you—that you only represented Him as one of *them*. Be faithful to Him who is the Prince of all these kings of the earth, of all the mighty powers who in the persons of their followers are “ever furiously raging and taking counsel together against Him.”

(2) The relation of these religions to each other seems to me worthy of deep consideration, and furnishes the strongest reasons for being faithful to your Master and His Word.

If we may be influenced by some of those who have written learnedly and well on this theme, it is not true that the Chinese nation is now divided into different classes, sharply defined by these three main sects. It is said with truth, that it is possible for a man in these days to be both a Buddhist and a Confucianist, and at the same time to conform to some of the ceremonial of the Taouist sect, and to the philosophy of its great sage, with undissembled reverence. This arises, in the estimation of one at

least of our esteemed missionaries, from the fact that these religions meet different requirements of our nature, and that man's complex heart can turn successively to them all for guidance and refreshment.

Confucianism mainly regards man as a *moral* being in his social relationships, and, eschewing the profundities of our spiritual nature and the gorgeous appeal to the senses, deals, as Positivism or Secularism may do in the West, with the ethical aspects of man's nature and circumstances. The ground of moral obligation, the right and wrong of human life, are referred to their proximate reasons and causes.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is eminently metaphysical, and appeals to the *intellectual* nature of man. It deals with the truth and falsehood rather than the right and wrong of human life. It goes into a dateless past to find the spiritual causes of present disaster or prosperity; and though its *summum bonum* in its highest form is extinction, a negation of everything, even of the consciousness of existence, or even of nothingness, yet it has filled up a measureless space of duration between this present life and that ultimate repose, with the supposed method by which man shall emerge from sin, from sense, from desire, and even from the cycle of existence. The *truth*, as the Buddhist thinks it to be, the truth of the utter unreality of all things, when once grasped, will set man free, emancipate him, elevate him far above those who are as yet either

gods or men. Thus Buddhism, by its metaphysical speculations on the causes of things and the nature of the soul, by the long cycle of past and future lives which it teaches, and by its mystical explanation of all the universe, meets, or attempts to satisfy, the hidden wants of those human souls, which mere ethical teaching can never reach. Its asceticism, its ceremonial, its priestly life, its vast extent, its colossal promises, its conception of humanity as a whole, its supposed basis on truth, make it a fascinating study, as well as one of the most awful facts in the history of the world.

Man, however, is something more than a moral and an intellectual being. He has a physical nature, and is in the midst of a physical universe. He has diseases of body, engendered by the corruptions of the soul; and Taouism seems to have preserved in a rather more elevated form the old Pantheistic worship of nature, with the homage supposed to be due to genii, and to the spirits of the stars, woods, and fountains. It promises, by attention to its charms and ceremonial, to cure these evils, to spiritualize and emancipate the soul, which is, in this philosophy, only an efflux of the grosser nature of man; and thus it makes its latitudinarian appeal in many forms to the devotees of the other religions. Now you, my brother, have to bring the gospel of Christ to bear upon this dread trinity of misconception and delusion. The gospel in its different aspects once revealed its infinite worth both to the Jew and to the Greek, to the barbarian

and to the Roman; offering to the Jew all that the Jew was really seeking in the way of power, of sacrifice, of symbol; all that the Greek ever demanded in the way of wisdom and truth, philosophy and beauty; all that the barbarian needed as a deliverance from his bondage, and an explanation of the grim mystery of unfathomable Providence; all that the Roman ever rightfully required as a way of ruling and disciplining mankind. As Christ crucified was both sign and wisdom, liberty and order, and gained the victory over every style and form of man in the Western world, from the many-sidedness and unity of the truth involved in it, so I believe, when Christ crucified is preached, is really brought home to the Confucianist, all the moral nature in him will be raised, refined, and influenced. The grace of God in Christ will teach the denial of all ungodliness and worldly lust; will respond to the mighty voice of conscience; will reveal the true brotherhood of man; will supply the great sociologist with his real law of fellowship; will declare the whole of the way not only by which he may become the true follower of the great sage, but the image of the Eternal Father. But the preaching of the gospel will do more; it will meet the cry of the poor Buddhist for the truth; the truth of his own nature and destiny; will shew him that *that* truth is not the unreality of things, but their intense reality; that it is appointed unto men once to die, not a thousand times; and that Christ suffered once for the sins of

the world. It will cut away the very ground of all his fearful doubt and agony. It will proclaim to him that sin is not eternal, but that life in God is; and that this life is in His Son. There is a depth in the mystery of God incarnate, which his philosophy and traditions will help him to understand; but it is not an abyss of darkness, but an abyss of light and love. The paradise of Amitabha, which he has fashioned for himself, will turn out, perhaps, to be the faint gleam of light granted him, to understand the nature of that "Jerusalem which is above," which cometh down out of heaven from our God, and before the starry portals of which "He who openeth and no man shutteth" is ever saying to His faithful children,—“See, I have set before you an open door.”

But Christ crucified, your Master, and His Word, will do more than this, for He is the great Saviour of the body. It is He who “shall fashion it like unto His glorious body,” and the whole of His ministry is one of healing and deliverance. Thus the poor Taoist shall also see in Him that which he is ever seeking in his charms and spells; the Great Physician, the Resurrection and the Life, as well as the Way and the Truth. Verily! when Jesus said “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life” He might have been especially addressing the three hundred millions of the land of Sinim, who with varied successes, and vast and awful results, have been seeking elsewhere in vain.

We shall pray for you, my brother, that you may be faithful to the Master and to this Word of His. I know you will. He who has called you to be His servant, and accepted the offering you have made, will help you to proclaim the Holy Gospel of peace to the seared and bleeding and wasted heart of the Buddhist on his long sad road to empty nothingness; to offer the way of salvation and teach the principle of holiness and the basis of eternal righteousness to the proud disciple of the sacred books; and to reveal the true Physician and the balm of Gilead to the diseased and corrupted heart wherever it is found.

IV. Faithfulness to the Society in England, by which you are recommended to the grace of God.

It has been well argued that in almost every period of the history of Protestant missions the character and zeal of our missionaries, and of the English residents in the East, have been tolerably fair representatives of the religious character of the Church at home. I know that if we wish our missionaries universally to be holy and zealous, inspired with their work, and absorbed in its glorious enthusiasm, we must rise in the tone of our own piety, we must be less worldly, selfish, and calculating, both in our faith and our sacrifice. The missionary is our servant, but he is so in the loftiest sense; he is our ambassador, our representative, our champion in the field; he is doing work for us, which it is our solemn duty to discharge. Be faithful to us; do not allow

us to slumber or forget you; do not fail to inspire us with the results of your observation; throw incense on the altar; rebuke us when we seem absorbed in ourselves, or dare to forget our representative. Do not hesitate to tell your discouragements as well as your success. Be faithful to us in England. Your work will soon be stripped of its romance, and denuded of sentimental excitement; it will be hard conflict with commonplace sinfulness, with individual transgressions. It will not be a battle of giants with the mighty forms of Buddha and Confucius, but a hand to hand encounter with ignorance, prejudice, and sin. Be faithful to us; and we shall know much better then how to pray for you, and in one sense, to work with you. We have ignorance and worldliness to encounter at home on this very theme; every now and then it comes forth, like a cloud of black smoke rolls over a fair landscape. Nothing would more effectually prevent this calamity than a knowledge of the case, and you too will, I doubt not, be roused sometimes from lethargy by remembering the strong feelings of sympathy, and love, and sacrifice that are ever ready in certain quarters to flow forth towards you.

There is, however, a characteristic about the faithfulness which Christ enjoined on the angel of the Church in Smyrna, of peculiar interest to every missionary of the cross. It is this—"Be thou faithful unto death." There is much probability that the individual man who was thus addressed by the aged

Apostle was no other than the saintly Polycarp, who amid the persecution of Antoninus Pius was one of the most glorious martyrs of the early Church. It was he who disdained the idea of deliverance from the lion's jaw and the crackling flame, to be purchased by abjuring his faith or denying his Master. He must have had these words in his recollection when he replied to the Roman proconsul's invitation to swear by the fortune of Cæsar and reproach Christ,—“Eighty and six years have I continued serving Him and He hath never wronged me at all, how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?” And he was faithful even in the midst of the inhuman shout and of the loathsome cruelty to which they subjected him, and to the last moment of his earthly consciousness he glorified the faith, and the truth, and the power of Christ.

Let me remind you, my brother, of this inevitable fact, which must mingle with all our ideas of service. Death is the sad, grim accompaniment of every one of our projects; he mingles with all our plans; we can in reality do nothing which does not bring us nearer to him: we are always making our shroud and digging our grave. Death throws his shadow over our bridal feasts, and our hours of glory. The laurels of our victory, the flowers of our fame, the creations of our brain, the children of our bodies, the monuments that we carve for ourselves, are all, like ourselves, passing away. The language of Christ

seems to say to every worker for Him, 'I have not taken away this deep mystery from your lot, I have taken away the sting and the victory of death, but I require a faithfulness to your work, notwithstanding the state in which I have left this great event.' He expects us to prove our belief that He has abolished death by the calmness with which we can face it, by the ease with which we can meet it. Death is the term of our service, and nothing short of this. We must hold on until then, trustfully and patiently. There is no shorter period than this; there are no leisure moments, when we have done our work, when we can afford to relax our energy and renounce our faith. The idea of losing our life in His service is not to damp our ardour, nor to close our advance in any particular direction, but rather it is intended to stimulate our zeal and to shew that the hour of discharge or of re-enlistment in some nobler service is drawing on. There may be mysteries in our faith which we are most eager to solve, but it is our part to be faithful to them, and patient under them, even unto death. We are not promised deliverance from them, but told "to endure unto the end." There may be conflict between conscience and passion, between Christ and the world. We may be in sore dismay, but, my brother, let us not say we shall die if this conflict rages thus, nor tell Christ "we cannot bear it;" He will only reply with unerring love and wisdom, 'Possibly you may die, but "be faithful unto death."' "

The condition of our service, my dear brother, is that it *must* include the hour when the overtaxed or exhausted human energies shall sink. There is no unkindness or wrong done to us by this inevitable termination of our service. It is, in fact, the principle, the term, on which we can accept any duties from the Master. He will have this clause in our articles of agreement, "faithfulness unto death." It is not faithfulness up to any period terminable by ourselves, nor on to the expiration of any fixed date, nor to the hour of self-appointed discharge; but it is a devotedness continued to a solemn moment which is entirely and absolutely in His own control; to a period altogether in His hands. It is faithfulness in view of considerations which are sufficient to wear out the spirit of a baser servitude, and which can only be voluntarily undertaken under the inspiration of holy love. Christ will not receive half our heart; He will be either nothing or everything to our souls. He will condescend to use us, but we must be disposed to say, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' 'Where wouldst Thou have me to go?' We have no reserve of strength, of health, of talent, of time, during which we may relax our energies, or cease our vigilance, or claim our own discharge. This is all we know of the period, of the term of our service, of the law of our rest, of the length of the battle. 'It must be unto death.'

Oh, my brother, it may not be that we fight conspicuously in the sight of the armies of the living

God. It may not be ours to witness, as the angel of the Church of Smyrna did, for the Holy One; albeit we must be "faithful unto death." We may be forgotten by our fellows, hidden from all eyes but His; we may have no sympathy from companions, no cheering words from comrades in the fight; we may even hear nothing further on this score from the great Captain of our salvation. But we must be "faithful unto death" in our spirit, our trust, our obedience, and our love. This may seem hard measure, but not when we remember how He has urged this claim upon us. If He had hesitated to undertake our redemption we should never have been summoned to His service. "He who liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death," must have vastly different notions of it from that which our weakness and ignorance avail to form. To us it is a drear and shameful unclothing; but to Him it is the moment of a Divine array when we are "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," and when "mortality is swallowed up of life." He looks at death as a foe whom He has worsted. He knows the mettle and the malice of His great antagonist. He has put him to the proof, and the proof was too great. Whereas *we* tremble at the thought of the encounter, to Him it is the moment of our discharge from doubt, from temptation, from servitude, from waiting, from long patience, from tedious toil; to Him it is our acceptance of the reward, the crown,

and the glory. "Take it on trust a little while, soon thou shalt read the mystery right in the full sunlight of His smile."

There is much connexion in the mind of Him who is the "truth," the "way," and the "life," between faithfulness and triumph. Thus elsewhere He says, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." A crown brings us into higher fellowship with the King. Thou shalt, if thus faithful, sit down crowned at a banquet of kings. A living crown, not one fashioned by human hands; an immortal crown which shall not wither, ever retaining the zest of its first bestowment and the charm of its first wearing, shall be thine. There shall be no tarnish on its gold, no autumn on its leaves of glory, for they shall be taken from the tree of life, and be ever fresh with the dews of Paradise. And I may say to all who hear me, that with slight difference in phrase these words are applicable to us all. We must all be faithful to our human heart. It is sometimes wiser than our logic, greater than our tradition, stronger than our circumstances; a Divine messenger of love, and charity, and sympathy. We must still more certainly be faithful to conscience, and exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man. We must all be faithful to Him who speaks through heart and conscience, and who is greater than either. Let us be faithful in a few things; be faithful in the use of the talents, whether

five, or two, or only one, which He has entrusted to us. Let us be faithful unto death, and we too shall receive the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give unto all them that love His appearing.

SERMON XIX.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.*

JOHN VI. 44 and 2 COR. v. 10.

The last day . . . We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

AN unerring justice is ever awake amid the affairs of men. We need not wait till death or doom are ushered in, to learn that "judgment is set, and that the books are open." Even "now is the judgment of this world." "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men's they follow after. Likewise, also, the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." Sin brings its own punishment, not only in the wretchedness and chastisement which it inflicts, but in the evil disposition, the deteriorated conscience, the lowered moral standard, and the hidden face of God. There are invincible links, binding together into indissoluble union certain sins and certain sorrows; and Divine grace

* This sermon was preached to an assembly of working men on the last night of a year.

has conjoined peculiar states of mind with corresponding blessedness. The connection between extravagance and poverty, between dissipation and disease, between dishonesty and disgrace, is so intimate and common, that the exception only proves the rule. The few instances where brazen-faced roguery contrives to outwit unsuspecting goodness are so rare, so few and far between, that they really produce no effect upon the general run of sentiment on the subject. There may be some iron constitutions that can brook an immense deal of folly and vice without succumbing to the deadly influence, but the damage done to the soul and the hardening of the conscience are fearful compensation for the comparative and apparent immunity.

On the other hand, poverty of spirit, godly sorrow, true humility, real hunger after righteousness, mercifulness, purity, and charity, bring the benedictions of Jesus with them. The eternal laws of God's kingdom do not fail to associate sterling blessedness with real virtue, and progressive happiness with increasing excellence. If a man sows to the Spirit he reaps life eternal. If he delights in God he receives the desires of his heart. The unction of the Holy One is the earnest of the inheritance.

If certain sinners are surprised with alarming reverses, or with sudden calamities, it is not right to say that these are judgments which God's providence has inflicted upon their transgressions. It would be in direct contravention of the teaching

of common sense and of ordinary observation, it would be in direct teeth of the statement of our blessed Lord, to think that "those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, were greater sinners than all those who dwelt in Jerusalem." It is most presumptuous to undertake the task of declaring what are the visible signs of God's displeasure against some specific infractions of His holy laws. But, my brethren, over and above all the strange and mysterious evolution of Divine Providence, there is a deeper and very obvious sense in which our conduct perpetually establishes the fact of Divine moral government, and proves that there is a judgment always going on, a condemnation that never slumbers, that we are the creatures of a holy God; that we all, as His vicegerents in this matter, are inscribing on the tablets of eternal justice verdicts from which there is no appeal.

Our every day's life reveals the accumulated effects of a past life-time, each day's life adds to that effect, whatever it may be, and prepares the way for the character of every to-morrow. Let us take the departments under which I have reviewed our daily life: our talk, our wishes, our work, and our pleasures. Our *talk* of to-day is not due to the mere circumstances in which we are placed to-day; but is largely owing to a long accumulation of influences to which we have submitted ourselves for years. Evil conversation is not merely a sin, but a judgment for the habit that has been formed, or the

temptations that have been yielded to in the days that are gone by. No man begins by telling bare-faced falsehoods; if he utters a lie, it is a judgment on him for the dispositions that he has not quenched in the bud, and is very probably the accumulation of evil and untruthful influences that have been round about him and within him through many previous days. In the same way our habitual *wishes* reveal the thoughts we have indulged in, the visions we have hugged to our heart, and the kind of indulgences we have sought. Our *work* and our *pleasure*, the things we do and the things we delight in, are every one of them consequences of previous folly or restraint, of habitual purpose, or project, or faith. Though we may be utterly unable to discover, or to analyze, the antecedents of all our present feelings and dispositions, it is impossible to deny that they are the results of previous conduct, and that thus, in a large and deep sense, they are the retributions of God's eternal justice.

The spirit with which you received some injury that was done to you yesterday, the way in which you encountered some grievous temptation, and the feeling with which you met a providential infliction, far more than either the injury, the temptation, or the sorrow, were the judgments of God upon your foregoing life.

To make my meaning clearer, let me suppose two men to be in partnership in business: they were thriving and prosperous, but during the past week,

a person whom they trusted has grossly deceived them, and at this moment they are in consequence tottering on the verge of insolvency. An injury was done to them by a cause over which they had no control, a bitter drop has been wrung into their cup of blessing by some inscrutable Providence,—and here may be a great temptation to them both, to cherish revenge towards or commit injustice upon some other people. Now it would be difficult, or presumptuous, to say that this event is a judgment upon either, or both of them, for some spiritual infidelity or moral transgression committed under other circumstances; but the way in which they severally meet the calamity is the real judgment upon them both, and will give an absolute verdict either of praise or blame. One will be in a towering passion, the other may be deeply and quietly grieved; the one may resolve on some bitter retaliation, may determine some dishonest speculation to retrieve his ruined fortunes, or may even, to save appearances, tell a great number of practical falsehoods. The other, one of the meek who shall inherit the earth, will rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. One of them declaims against things in general, and speaks of God's providence as a delusion and an unfairness; but the other says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not." Now this difference in the conduct of the two men is the real judgment on their past lives, on their dispositions, their passions, and

their training, and declares that in this "every day life" there is a perpetual "judgment going on beforehand."

Again, the spirit with which you receive the gospel of God, with which you listen to the Bible, with which you think of God, of Christ, of eternity, is a result which declares that the judgment of God is according to truth. This is *THE* judgment, said Christ, that "light is come into the world, and that men love darkness rather than light." The reception which you give to the law of God, the submission or otherwise of your mind to the will of God, is a verdict upon all you have been, and done, for years. It is the retributive effect either of your previous obedience or disobedience. The reception you give to the amnesty of love, to the possibility of forgiveness, to the hope of eternal purity and Divine love, will be God's judgment upon you. There are two men sitting side-by-side: when I speak of the cross of Christ to the one, it will awaken tender contrition in his heart, it will melt down his pride, he will tremble with a profound gratitude, he will feel that it is to him the symbol of hope, the guarantee of mercy, the type of holy life. If I could speak of it with fitting words, I know that I could touch the springs of holy tears. To the magic of the love which it administers there would be the response of gratitude and sacrifice; a murmur would run through this assembly: "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which

the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world." But there may be some man present whose heart would, at the mention of the cross, be wrinkled with scorn, and who, with proud, with suicidal hand, would put the solace by. He will not come to Jesus that he may have life. Conscious of no deep need, "he laughs now," "he is filled with his own consolations," and "knows not that he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Whatever other explanation may be given of this most obvious and notorious fact, the interpretation is Scriptural and just, that this is a judgment. This difference among men is the retribution of eternal law. This is the making manifest of the past. In this proceeding, week after week, God's book of remembrance is opened, and we do all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Thus the Sunday and the week-day, the sanctuary and the workshop, do not merely furnish conditions and opportunities of worship and toil, but they are the material and means by which God is perpetually judging us. They prove to us and to others, to His universe and to Himself, what we *are*, what we *have been*, what we *have DONE*; and with unerring truth, with infinite justice, with awful constancy, they assign to us the consequences of our conduct, and they render to us according to our works. There may be apparent inequalities in the sorrow that follows upon sin. Tyranny may triumph, lust may seem to be satisfied and happy, the wicked may flourish, the evil-worker may wax stronger and

stronger,—filial love, parental kindness, real honesty, true religion, holy pearls that they are, may be trodden upon and crushed by the iron heel or swinish hoof of the world; but, my brethren, be assured that there is less real inequality than is apparent in all this. Looked at in the light of eternity, sin is a greater judgment and a more awful curse than any amount of misfortune. If a man can commit certain sins without a pang of remorse, without a “dart to strike through his liver;” still more, if he can boast of his transgressions; if a man can cheat without the griping pangs of conscience; if he can despise the holy love of Calvary without planting thorns in his pillow, he is rudely scribbling all over the book of fate, he is writing in his own heart’s blood his own condemnation. The smile of the villain, the wrinkle of apparent joy upon his face, the dishonest man’s outward prosperity and his seeming success, may be judgments of God, as clear, and as ringing, and as terrible as any other that can overtake him. Come into the sanctuary of God, and you will, with David, see it all.

Let this thought take full hold of your hearts, that *sin* is, in itself, a great judgment of God; that the disposition to sin, that any complacency about sin, or any under-estimate of sin, are the greatest condemnations that can as yet be pronounced upon an immortal man. Would to God I could make some of you feel that the judgment of God upon you is not a thing which must wait until some distant,

perhaps impossible future, but that it is going on, and is always complete. God's judgment is not a balance-sheet that will be struck at the end of time, but it is the daily valuation of your spiritual state, and need, and powers. There are some complicated accounts of this world's wealth, in regard to which stock is perpetually taken; which wind up and balance themselves every day, which even reveal the pecuniary interest on every day's profit or loss. My brethren, this is the case with every one of our own lives: our present feelings are the heirs of all our past feelings; our thoughts the result of all previous thought; our desires are the interest upon and product of all our past passions; we have a spiritual position, and we render in our account daily. God posts it all up, and angels and devils, night after night, as we lay to down to rest, audit and find it correct. Oh, my brethren, "now is the judgment of this world!"

Still, although the account, the balance, the judgment, are being given always, there are seasons when it is easier than at other times for us to review the facts of our past life, and when this retributive judgment of God may reveal itself more clearly to our mind. Of these let me instance,—

I. The LAST DAY of a year.

Let us all endeavour, for a few moments, to take spiritual account of this past year. Let there be no self-deceptions, no paltry excuses, no dishonourable omissions, no throwing of the blame on other people

or circumstances; but let us do our best to know what is "audited and found correct," this last Sunday night of another year. Here are fifty Sundays, with all their memories, their fellowship, and their promises opened before us and asking for examination. A rather sad red-letter list. Some of them stand out brightly, as days when the clouds broke and the sun shone upon us in its strength; days of heaven upon earth, days of heaven's gifts, of holy joys, of happy work. But, alas, many of them witness against us! I will tell you some of the entries which stand against you in those eternal books of remembrance, as sad confessions, or memorials of conscience. Thus, 'To-day I have lost a chance of heaven;' or again, 'I lost sight of all the memories, and meaning, and anticipations of the holy day.' But see, here are some blank pages altogether, no entry even by Conscience, or by Remembrance. What shall we do with them? Stop! perhaps they are written in some invisible sympathetic ink! Let the fire try every man's work! What is the writing now? See the great staring letters—they are very black, very awful, I dare not read them out: most of the words are too sad for me to utter here! But I read, 'Oblivion, delirium, darkness, and the shadow of death,' and I pass on. 'Good resolutions' smile on some of these mystic pages; the smothering of solemn thought darkens others. There are also many of these days that tell of holy life, of earnest thought, of jubilant praise; that declare the inspiration of

strong desires after God, after pardon and righteousness, after happiness and heaven. But there are three hundred other days and more. What of them? Every moment is registered, and the influence of every thought is telling on us, is judging us. The Father has loaded us with mercy, our cup has often run over with blessedness. When we have had to drink bitter dregs of sorrow and disappointment, we have found pearls in the distasteful cup, and health in the nauseous draught. These mercies and these sorrows, these strangely unwelcome lessons, have been "humbling and PROVING us, to see what was in our heart, and whether we would serve the Lord or no."

We have formed good and evil habits this year, and we have also broken both. We have fostered old dispositions. We may have rooted out weeds of earlier thought; we may have plucked up the poisonous, rank, and tangled fibres of worldly passion, that choke God's word; or we may have been watering these mischievous thoughts, and preparing for ourselves a whole harvest of such things for the future. We may have formed associations that will affect our moral nature for ever. There may be some professing or real Christian who has married himself or herself to a spiritual corpse, and is condemned to drag that weight about for ever. There have been holy associations formed, blessed unions of heart and hand and life, in the great work of God, which shall be silver cords of Divine attraction to the Cross and

the kingdom of God. There have been things done which cannot be undone: there are stains upon the inward life, or the outward relationships, which nothing can utterly wipe out, the consequences of which are already asserting themselves beyond the possibility of denial.

There may be a youth here who during this year has broken away from all the influences of home, who has set at nought the tender appeals of his mother and sisters, and has begun to live, as he thinks, like a man; or there may be one who for the first time has proved unfaithful to his home, his employers, or his servants. There may be some person here who has told his first deliberate lie; or there may be one who has offered his first heartfelt prayer, who has fought some glorious battles with Apollyon in the valley of the shadow of death, who has begun to triumph in the birthday of his soul.

Let me implore each of you, my brethren, to look thus for a moment at the past, and to see that such things as these make up your whole present position. Ten thousand unnoted, unrememberable things there may be; but the accumulation and combination of them all make you the men you now are. The great sign of God's retribution, of God's judgment upon your lives, is not some eternal cloud hovering over you big with blessing or with curse. It is not the entanglement of your circumstances, but it is the moral and spiritual life with which you will infallibly enter on a new sphere and term of your existence.

The shifts that you have to put yourself to, to avoid the consequences of your past conduct; the ease with which you can sin; the feelings, wishes, talk, work, or pleasure with which you will enter upon the new year, form the sentence of eternal judgment upon you.

II. But I must advance, in the second place, to the consideration of another season of judgment, which is forcibly suggested by this line of thought—I mean *THE LAST DAY OF LIFE*.

Oh, my beloved brethren, there is a day hurrying on, when we shall have to bear into eternity the accumulation of the effects of our life, the sum-total of all God's judgments upon us. There is so much retribution in this world that no man can utterly free himself from the belief that retribution awaits him in the world to come. The good man and the blasphemer must die. The last day of life must be a day of judgment to us. We are all a year nearer to this great mystery. We all know that it must be: that sooner or later, not one of us will remain here to weep over sin, to glorify Christ, or to dare any longer the love of heaven. It is commonly thought to be the widest criterion of truth, that a thing which is clearly a principle of thought with everybody must be real and true. Now it is the most universal impression and conviction, one, more universal than the belief in an external world or a God, that there will be a just retribution after this life. Even those heathen who have no notion of

a superintending Spirit or Great Creator believe in the fate which will apportion our future existence in harmony with our present conduct. And the atheist must acknowledge that if fate or nature has brought him into being, then fate or nature can, and may continue, his power of suffering and of sin. So that if he denies the being of his God he has little satisfaction in contemplating the future, and he can have no faith either in the justice or the love which shall determine his future life.

Now it is no old wives' fable, but an obvious and notorious fact, that we are very near the solution of this enigma, each man for himself. We may none of us enjoy the idea of death. It is a grand, a sublime, a terrible thing to die; with the consciousness within ourselves of immortal existence, and the knowledge that up to the moment of death we have been before the judgment-seat of God, and have been constantly reaping the harvest of seeds which we had sown in our nature. The Christian, in spite of his great consolations, knows more than the thoughtless man what life is, and what death is; and it is not a wonderful thing that he should often be in some darkness as he goes down into the deep river, that his "soul should sometimes be exceeding sorrowful," that he should say, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Our obvious duty and wisdom clearly are, to make the best and the most of this great mystery of our lot. It is at least our proud pre-eminence above the brute, to be conscious of the

retributive dealings of God, and also to know that we must die.

‘Nothing will make me believe in this “for ever,” this future life,’ says one of my hearers; ‘I am sick of this life, the “sooner ’tis over the sooner to sleep;” I care nothing, hope nothing, fear nothing about eternity!’ Do you mean what you say, my brother? Then that is your judgment now; you have been trifling with your soul till you have deadened its finer sensibilities, you have perverted your tastes until you have no flavour of immortality, you have wounded your spirit until you have seared and stupefied your immortal conscience. Believe me, that is your present JUDGMENT; your fearful balance-sheet now is, ‘No sense of immortality;’ ‘A soul dead in sins, and steeped in the world;’ ‘A man without hope;’ ‘A lost soul.’

But oh, my brother, your *opinion* about ‘for ever’ can have no manner of effect upon the reality of that ‘for ever!’ A party of boatmen on the Niagara river may have a very strong opinion when they are caught by the rapids that it is very pleasant rowing; but neither their shouts nor their merriment will alter the fact that the world’s cataract is close at hand. You have a strong opinion that hell-fire is a delusion; that they are superstitious, and cruel, and ignorant who ask you to pause, and awake, and prepare for this coming, this continued retribution; but your opinion will not have the slightest, the remotest, the minutest influence on the tremendous fact.

I know you may retort upon me, that my opinion that there is such retribution makes no difference, and will have no bearing on the fact. I honestly allow that; but I should like to know which of us on either alternative is the best off; the man who believes in God, in godliness, in redemption, in the power of penitence or faith, in the might of the great sacrifice, and who lives in full view of another world; or he, who having an opinion that they are delusions, does yet, in spite of universal conscience and God's holy revelation, deliberately suspend his judgment and postpone his preparation? Even should I grant that the Christian may now be deceived, that Apostles and Prophets, that Jesus Christ, that every great world-teacher, that all the wisest, and noblest, and best of men have in this matter been the most deluded and ignorant of mortals, then let us praise God they have never been undeceived! If there be no "for ever," there are none to feel the chagrin of their broken hearts, or baffled hopes. It has been a kind delusion, brightening death-beds, and spreading sunshine over open graves; and no believer in eternity, no man prepared for heaven, no child of God who was longing to behold Him, is really disappointed. BUT, if there be a future life, he who has treated it as a delusion will be sternly and terribly undeceived when it is too late.

The majority, however, of my hearers are neither stout-hearted enough to doubt, nor imbruted enough to ignore, the side of their own existence which abuts

on God and eternity. Yet I fear that there are many who have the effrontery, and, I must add, the meanness, to think that a life of sin may be wound up by a season of penitence and faith, when disease shall have sapped the pleasures of life, or when age and infirmity have drained or exhausted its energies. I fear that there are many who deliberately count on a "death-bed repentance," and thus practically shew that they have some faith in the continued and certain judgment of God. But if such an intention had in it no ingratitude and ungodliness, believe me when I say, from considerable experience, that severe sickness is not the time when a man can honestly and earnestly ponder these awful realities for the first time. Faith in God does not consist in merely reconciling oneself to the coming dissolution. I believe that there are certain diseases of body which are of such a nature as to take away all the physical desire of life, and that the peace and contentment which steal over such death-beds are utterly delusive. The love of God I know to be infinite, and unless the blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin, I have not the smallest hope of eternal life for myself, and I dare not say one word that seems to limit the grace of God, but I believe it is a strange presumption which has credited the idea that the onward progress of a soul in sin and hardness, the reception thus of daily judgments of God against sin, should at last end in infinite blessedness and godlikeness. It is true that the bent of a life can be changed in a moment,

that the persecutor may become an Apostle, the blasphemer a saint, the impatient, querulous, hard-hearted, depraved man may be revolutionized and renewed; but who is to know, how can the man himself know this, upon a death-bed? When the cry is heard, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," it is too late to buy oil for the extinguished lamp.

The way in which a man dies, proves nothing, unless the death be in some sense the continuance of the spirit with which he has lived; if in real harmony and consistency with his life, and if that have been holy, it is like a door into the invisible world, a new flash of light from the great white throne of the Conqueror of death upon the glazing eyes, the deep humiliation, and the corrupting dust of death. Many are the proofs that the ruling passion, which is God's judgment of our lives, is strong in death. I knew a covetous, closefisted, tyrannical man, who had professed penitence, and grief, and faith on his death-bed, but who, within five minutes of his last breath, used it up in quarrelling with a servant about the waste of a sixpence.

I remember a holy servant of God, whose life had been an ardent and devoted sacrifice of praise and work, who had felt all the power of a personal friendship for the Lord Jesus Christ, who "knew whom he had believed," who gazed at last in deep stillness, if not unrest, upon the memories of his own past life, and upon the love of God. As he came near the last day of that beautiful life of his, he fixed his thoughts

and almost closed his lips, appearing to be in holy awful fellowship with the unseen Saviour; at length, after hours of perfect stillness, he whispered, "Faithful, faithful." A bright light stole over his face, as he seemed to thread the labyrinth and solve the mystery of love. "Higher," said he, "higher!" and they raised his pillows and lifted his dying head, but he waved his hand and rallied all his life's last energy to cry, "Excelsior!" and then his spirit soared into the regions of eternal purity and blessedness.

Who has not heard of the death of the Venerable Bede, the earliest translator of the Holy Scripture into our mother tongue, the master-spirit of the thriving community of devoted men who preached God's gospel in our land in his day? "They could not but rejoice," says an eyewitness, "when he said, 'It is time that I should go to Him who made me. I have had a long life upon this earth; the Merciful Judge has also ordered for me a happy life. The time of my departure is at hand. I have a desire to depart and be with Christ.' And with many such-like remarks he passed the day until eventide. 'Still one sentence of the Holy Gospel, dear master, remains unwritten.' 'Write quickly,' was his reply. After a little while his attendant said, 'Now the sentence is finished.' He answered, 'You have spoken the truth,—it is indeed finished. Raise my head in your hands, that I may call upon God my Father.' And being placed on the pavement of his cell, he said, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and

to the Holy Ghost,' and as soon as he had named the name of the Holy Spirit, he breathed out his spirit, and so departed to the kingdom of heaven." The last day of *our* life will inevitably come, whether we are prepared for it or not. May we die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his!

But the last day of human life deeply as it fascinates us is not that last day of all, with which the creation is travailing. As the last day of each life gathers together the retributions, and fears, and hopes of each man's life, as it expresses, in the fashion and garb in which a human soul is ushered into eternity, the sum total and accumulation of all the perpetual judgments of God's providence, so there is—

III. THE LAST DAY in a grander sense for every man, when the judgment of all shall be made manifest, when the wisdom of God shall be demonstrated, when the justice and love of God shall be vindicated.

I profess to know nothing of the stupendous machinery, the providential convulsions and mighty changes, that shall hurry on that day of the Lord. It is difficult to say how much of the language in which this is described is figurative, and how much is literal. But this we know, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

And there all human pride and presumption, all cavil and all question, all the science, all the power, all the majesty of men, shall sink into utter insignificance. I know nothing of the *how* or *when*, and I do not presume to instruct you. There are, however, three ideas connected with the *last day*, of great value and practical importance, and to these I call your attention.

1. The last day of TIME will dawn upon the world, and upon our spirits; that is, the human race will be gathered into eternity. Time is, that Time shall be no longer. The old dispensations shall cease, new ones open upon us. The sorrows and mysteries of time shall be over. The problem and darkness of man shall come to an end. God will finish it. A new heaven and a new earth shall arise out of the ruin and revolution of the old. The methods of thought, the sustenance of life, the relation to God, which are peculiar to time, shall be changed and re-established. We shall enter into the ETERNAL NOW. It will no longer be evening and morning of the first and last day: for evening and morning will be done with for ever. The last day will thus usher in an eternal state.

2. The last day will be the "great day of judgment." Associated with the re-assumption of our physical life, standing in some new and hitherto inconceivable relation to the universe, we shall have reached the last day of judgment. Then the retribution which has been borne by us into the un-

seen world will be eternally ratified. Then the permanence of our moral relations and conditions will assert themselves. All other distinctions shall fail: wealth will not be distinguishable from poverty; Dives will not be discerned from Lazarus by his dress or his possessions; the king and the peasant, the ermined judge and the chained prisoner, will no longer, as such, be distinguished. Even the philosopher and the little child, the most colossal and the feeblest human intellect, will hardly be discoverable from one another. But our moral relations to each other and to God will have endured the dissolution of the grave, will have weathered the mysteries of eternity, will have survived the revolutions of the resurrection-morning and of the solemn assize; and the mighty words will peal over the assembled multitudes,—“The time is at hand! The time is come! ‘Let him that is unjust, be unjust still; let him that is holy, be holy still.’”

Oh, what a day of self-accusation will it be! Listen to the upbraidings of ten thousand consciences:—‘How could I have been such a madman, that for a moment’s pleasure I should so often have risked my soul? What could have bewitched me to have turned away from the grace of God, from a love that was strong enough to teach even me to repudiate all ungodliness, and to help me to live soberly, righteously, and godly? How could I have trifled with, and trampled upon my Saviour? The Sunday broke over me, and reminded me a thousand times

of my obligations to the Father of my spirit and to the Saviour of the world, but I never heeded it. I thought all those who did give heed were righteous over-much. The wine-cups glittered, the strange woman caressed me, money was sweet, and self was dear, and now here I am, infinite, unmitigated fool that I have been! Those preachers, after all, told me the truth, and in my pride and lust I would not hear,—and now it is too late! That man cannot grieve, he can only gnash his teeth. There are no tears of penitence in his eye,—it is all sheer remorse. He has *no hope*, and the yell of despair closes the self-accusation.

It will be a day of justice. No lost soul will have the power of accusing the justice of the Most High. No lost man then will find his conscience rising up to comfort him. No inward sense of righteousness, no feeling that he is wrongly dealt with, will mitigate his doom; and the thunders of eternal judgment will drown even the pleadings of remorse.

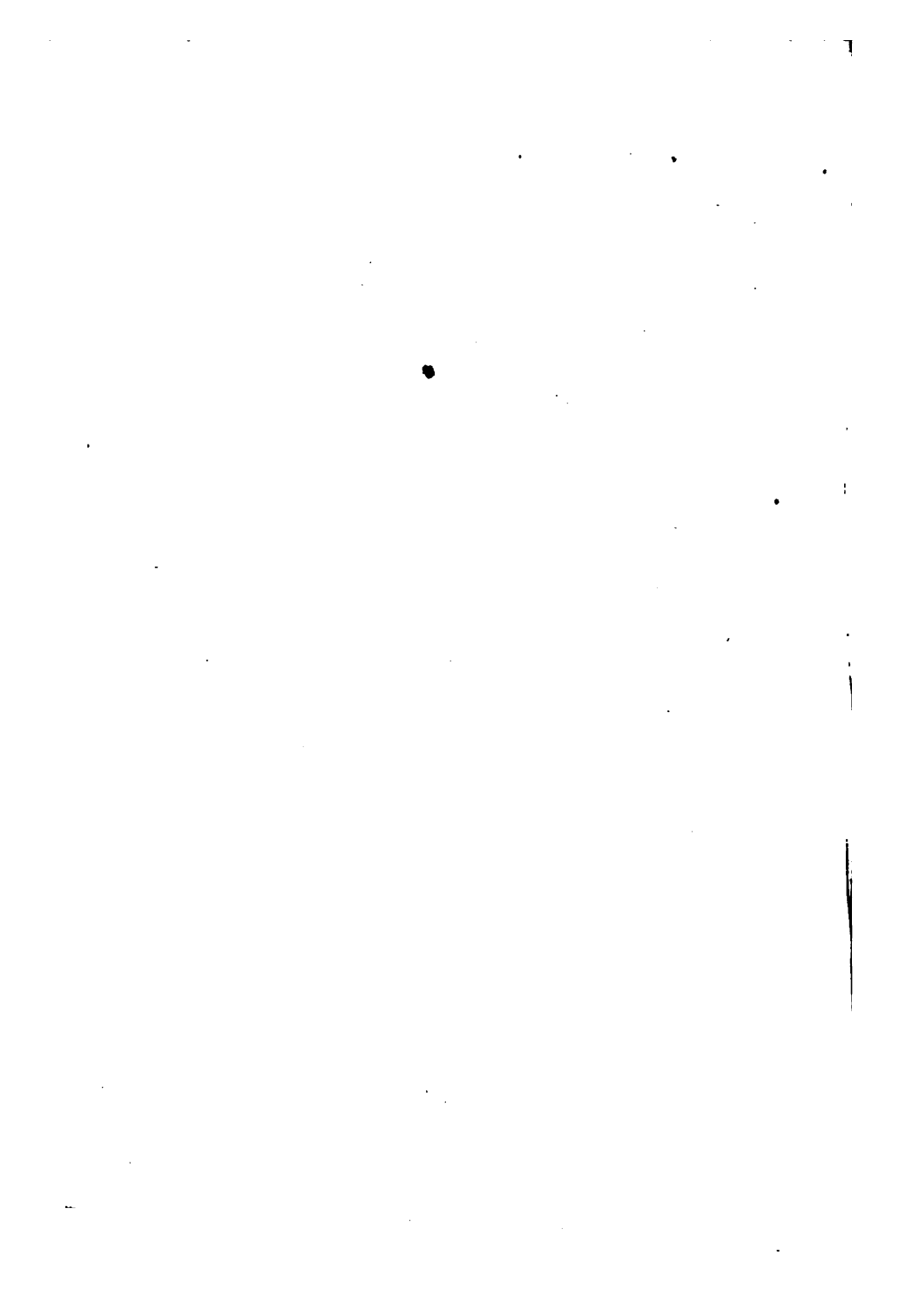
3. The last day will be the great DAY OF JESUS CHRIST—the day of the Lord. It seems high time that the world in which the Eternal Word became man, where for a while He pitched the tent of His humiliation and His glory, should become the scene of His victory, should be the witness of His triumph. Still He bears His cross along our streets, and wears His crown of thorns. Men make light of His invitation, and despise the mighty results of His sacrifice.

Still, in various ways, the pleasures of sin, the power of the flesh, the attractions of the world, countervail His promises, and ignore the infinite blessings He came to put within our reach. It is indeed high time that He should be vindicated from our calumnies, and relieved of our oppressive ingratitude, that all His excellence should be demonstrated, and His pity proclaimed, that the infinite extent of His mediatorial work should be seen, that the great Conqueror of Death, the Prince of Life, should be hailed as such, by the countless multitudes of those who really feel that He is *ALL* in *ALL*. The time will come, the day will dawn, when all the wisdom, and righteousness, and glory of His love shall stand conspicuously forth, when the Sun of Righteousness shall draw back the veil that hides His face, when a rapturous burst of praise shall break from now buried generations, and from all the hosts of the saved, when His heart of infinite capacity shall receive the acclamations of the universe. The day of Jesus Christ shall come when all that the Father hath given Him shall gather round Him; for He will not have lost *ONE* solitary, humble believer in His grace; He will not despise nor reject one single soul that has counted on His lovingkindness and power. It will be seen that He has been able to cut off the entail of sin, that He has availed to glorify and purify our humanity, to honour the righteousness while He proclaims the love of God, and that all judgment has been committed to His

hands because He is the pitiful and loving Son of man.

Then will the mystery of God be finished, and the mystery of life be unriddled. It will then be seen what were the legitimate issues of the life in sin and the life unto God. Then will the faith of God's elect be vindicated; their hope prove to have been no delusion, their rest in the Lord no misplaced confidence, their delighting in God the foretaste of eternal communion with the Father. Then it will be clear to all who have striven after resemblance to Christ, that the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit has awakened their new life within them; that their regeneration has been the restoration of an order and harmony lost in the fall, and regained in Christ; then will the long-severed hearts be united in the fellowship of a common love; then will Jew and Greek, bond and free, wise and unwise, the sage and the little child, exult in the oneness of their faith, and rejoice that in any humble degree they had risen up for the Lord against the workers of iniquity; and though the differences among men must and will be perpetuated to add zest to their fellowship and variety to their work, yet the great prayer of our High Priest will at length be heard,—“That they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee.” The last day of man's earthly probation will be the last day of unhallowed strife, of ignorant misunderstanding, of cruel suspicion; and it will be the first day of a new service, wherein God's servants shall serve

Him, and His name shall be in their foreheads; and that day no night shall darken, and no sin defile; for "there shall in nowise enter upon it anything that defileth or that maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."



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